

**STATEMENT BY WINSTON DOOKERAN
POLITICAL LEADER, CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE
AT A PUBLIC MEETING IN SIPARIA
10 OCTOBER 2007**

Highlights:

- *Dookeran tells of conversation with Kamla Persad-Bissessar on the announcement of the general elections*
- *Rejects again the 'unity' that has fragmented the nation in the past*
- *Warns that Manning will become the Caribbean's Mugabe*
- *Tells of 'the hired gun' that aims to mash up the COP*
- *Now focuses his fight against the PNM cartel*
- *Party increases campaign pace, now two national meetings and numerous cottage meetings across T&T every night.*
- *COP manifesto to be laid in Parliament as a contract with the people*

Thank you very much my friends. You heard it here tonight. There are some words of wisdom once said to me when I embarked on this journey; this improbable experiment in our democracy in our country.

Those words were: "If you want to create what is right, you must not refuse to destroy what is wrong."

Tonight as I listened to this fighter and courageous spokesperson, Anand Ramlogan, I realised that we are on the right path in Trinidad and Tobago – a Trinidad and Tobago where truth, justice and freedom shall always prevail. The time has come for us to destroy what is wrong in order to create what is right for generations to come.

Could you imagine that these people who cannot come together, and when they come together they go apart, and then when they go apart, they come back together...and each one accuses the other.

And now they are asking me to come to them? My friends I want to tell you that when I put you in Government, that Government shall be unshakable and it will divide itself. It shall remain united and it will pursue truth, justice and freedom.

Nobody in this country will forgive me if I enter into any arrangement in which I know will fall apart before it begins. What the people have been asking me to do is to stand firm. It is to stay clearly focused, it is to bring about the unity of the peoples of this country and to deliver them an unshakable Government for the next five years.

But I want to tell you of a conversation I had on the day when the election date was announced in Parliament. Mr Manning in a quivering voice said he was dissolving Parliament and calling the election.

As it turned out, before the announcement took place, when I walked into Parliament that Friday, I went without knowing the date was going to be called, to Kamla Persad-Bissessar, then Leader of the Opposition.

I said to Kamla: "Kamla, you know, timing is the most important instrument in politics. And I am getting the feeling that the time is now!"

She said: "What do you mean?"

I said: "I am telling you that the time is now, you come with us in the Congress of the People and I shall welcome you with open arms and we shall create political history in Trinidad and Tobago."

That was before the announcement. I did not know for sure that the Prime Minister was going to announce anything, but I sensed that the timing was right.

Then he made the announcement and I went to her again, I said: "Kamla, I did not realise that my statement on timing was as correct as it turned out to be because our objective is to have a two way race in this country – a one to one fight with the PNM and that we must use this time."

I told her then that we should go in front the cameras and agree. I told her that what was at stake was the future of our nation. What was at stake was the freedom of our people. What was at stake was too dangerous to contemplate.

There is no way we can allow Mr Manning to continue in office! So I told her we could go before the cameras and declare that we shall work together in order to defeat the PNM to form a new Government.

I am telling you that for the records.

Little did I know that a week and a half later, she would have to face the same fate as I faced a year and a half ago when I walked into the lion's den and spoke the truth. When I spoke the truth, they came down on me like a

tonne of bricks and now that led me to the formation of the Congress of the People.

Little did I know that 10 days later, she would suffer the same fate, so today I say to them and I say to her let us not forever crawl on our bellies, let us not forever succumb to what is wrong. If we know something is right, we cannot do what is wrong .

And they know and I know that the only thing that is right now is to put a Congress of the People Government in office for us to make it right.

My friends, I shall never fall for easy temptations, because I kept in my mind since entering politics that there are two things I would like to do in Trinidad and Tobago in my public life:

- (i) When I leave politics, I must leave a society that is united among the races.
- (ii) And when I do leave politics, I must leave a society in which everyone has an equal share in the spoils of the State and the poor must have a better deal in our land.

Those are my two objectives and therefore I will not be tempted nor shall I ever succumb to those who wish to threaten me.

Unity or death! And they meant it literally!

Twenty one days, and as I said some time ago in Aranguez they talked about a 21-day ultimatum. I told them in 21 days, we shall be having a 21-gun salute for the new Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

And now, the other ultimatums and threats, but it is simple to see. We are the ones that are promoting the unity of the people. We are the ones today that can sit here and say to the country that we have a party that has united the nation. We are trying to bring the rest of the society with us.

They want you to think that we are not in support of the unity of the people.

I can tell you one thing – I am not going to create a unity on top that will break up tomorrow and leave the people fragmented again .

I will not do that, and I want your permission. Are you telling me that is how I should move my friends?

So I say it again – do the right thing. You should have left Kamla as the leader with power and you would have solved the problem of unity in Trinidad and Tobago.

Those who are talking unity have been the architects of disunity in Trinidad and Tobago. It is only us in this platform can stand and look into the eyes

of all the people and say 'we believe in the unity of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.'

And I say that without fear of contradiction. Because what is now at stake is to create a new approach to politics.

I have no doubt whatsoever that we are on the verge of an historic victory. We are on the edge of what some said was an improbable experiment in democracy.

We are at the doorstep of writing a new page in the political history of Trinidad and Tobago.

Are you ready for change?

Are you ready for a Government of the Congress of the People?

Are you ready to elect a new Prime Minister in Trinidad and Tobago?

Well my friends from what you have said, we are ready. We have less than 30 days to achieve that task, impossible according to some. And now we must march forward with a cool head, we must march forward with a serious desire, we must march forward as we mobilize our courage.

We are on a winning track and we must win the next election on November 5th! There is no other alternative for this nation. We must win this election to save our nation.

You could not have gotten a better example of that than what has happened in the last two days.

On both sides, you have the implosion taking place. You heard here tonight of the senior Minister who after deliberation warned this nation that there is a dictator in the making in Prime Minister Manning.

This was the man who sat next to him for many years. And he gets up now and says that to the national community.

Take the warning, take the warning because this Prime Minister came to express in his actions a desire in his own party.

So what did he do? He built a Presidential Palace and he left the President's House to fall apart.

Then he went to the country with a proposal to have an Executive President. What does that mean? He wanted to remove the authority of anyone above him. We know that the President has certain residual powers.

It is a check! Mr Manning wants to remove that check and put himself as the Executive President. And to do that, he wants to have a party by bringing all these novices to his side. He would remove anyone who has experience and who can speak up for the nation so that he can have total command over his next Cabinet.

He is setting the pace to be the next Mugabe in the Caribbean by being the Executive President ; by being a dictator and I want you hear in Trinidad and Tobago to understand that we are in danger of losing our freedom. That is why I say that November 5th is Freedom Day in Trinidad and Tobago.

This is serious business! This is not a normal election. And we cannot have people who are trying to confuse the nation.

You have heard of the hired gun who has been told to go and mash up the COP. That is the job. He mash up the UNC, now he is coming to mash up the COP!

That is why I said that the PNM/UNC Alliance is wrong for this nation, it is now the Congress of the People that is right.

But I want you to understand, we are not hear to create political points or to simply ill-speak anyone. I am telling you that our freedom is at risk, our democracy is in trouble, our Prime Minister is on a certain course and it is you the people who must stop him right away.

So in Arima I said – 'the fire now start...'

My friends, here in Siparia, in La Brea, in Fyzabad...when I heard those who spoke here tonight; when I heard the young and vibrant Kevin Ratriam, and the constructive and committed Mahendra Dhaniram, and the solid, simple but strong defender of workers rights in Gilbert Agard, when I heard a man who is known for his reliability, Govindra Roopnarine and then the soft spoke leader who is unstoppable in her quest to save this nation, Carol Cuffy Dowlat, and when I heard of this fighter, this defender of the people, Anand Ramlogan, I say to you it is more than fire now.

There is only one party that can beat the PNM – and that is the Congress of the People.

Tonight, I would not have the time to speak to you too much longer. But I want to tell you that we did not arrive at this position just like that.

Last year, when I attempted to speak the truth and was booed, I said to myself: I had two options. I could have let the people remain in the falsehood of the politics which has brought them to where they were and then go and see about my own life.

But I started to fight what was then the cabal of the UNC and to me, that fight is over! And we are moving on to the next fight against the cartel of the PNM .

So I want to tell you here tonight that we shall speak no more on those who have already lost the fight. We will answer them with facts when they try to misrepresent us. But from now until November 5th, we shall fight the Cabal that is going to destroy our democracy.

We have developed a programme, a very detailed programme, in which we shall not only shake up the politics of this country, but also be able to rumble, rumble as we have never rumbled before over the next four weeks.

We have an enterprising programme with the people. I said when the elections bells were tolled that all leave was cancelled within the party. And I thank all our members for heeding that call because everyone is working 24 hours a day, seven days a week to unleash a new energy in our country.

Today, I say to you that we are going to double up!

Yesterday, after discussions with our Campaign Manager, we agreed that instead of having one national meeting per night, we shall have two national meetings per night from now on.

And we shall continue to have a multitude of meetings all over the country, in every constituency .

I had to tell my constituents in St Augustine to please allow me to be elsewhere for the time being. Right now in St Augustine a meeting is taking place in which a number of people have come out to defend us.

Ashvani Mahabir is in St Augustine tonight defending the Congress of the People and me as MP. Brinsley Samaroo is on that platform. In addition, we have a man who came out on Saturday and made the courageous stand on the platform of the COP; a well known Queen's Counsel and one who didn't need to get into politics.

He came to me and said: "Winston I am coming to support you. I am not a politician, but if people do not come and support you, they will allow themselves to give up their rights and freedoms and I want to give my support."

He is now on the platform in St Augustine – Vernon de Lima.

So while I am here in Siparia, I am speaking of the platform in St Augustine to tell them thank you very much for allowing me to be here.

This fight has to be a fight all over the country, every part of the nation and it is happening now.

What you are now witnessing is the greatest opportunity in our time to restore freedom in Trinidad and Tobago. Here you have a well constructed party, one that has brought together the best talent in the country.

You have seen our candidates and members speaking on our platforms. Here you have the solutions.

We have the solutions to make this a better place particularly for the vendors, for the children, for those in high school and university, for the poor among us, for the working poor, the taxi drivers, the farmers...those are the people who will be given the highest priority for this Government.

We will not put up tall buildings and forget the people in Trinidad and Tobago. When you put us there, I have already instructed my colleagues that in our first Cabinet meeting, we shall lay for consideration our entire programme of action partly reflected in this document.

You know why? You have been fooled so often by politicians. They have told you one thing and have done something else. I want to tell you that this shall be our contract with the people and we shall lay this in Parliament as a contract with the people.

So let me leave you by telling you that your party is ready. We are ready to take on the responsibility of governance. We are ready to create what is right, but we must destroy what is wrong.

That is where the power is; the power is in your hands because at the election, all power now is ceded to the people. It is no longer whether we succeed or fail, it is whether YOU succeed or fail.

All power is now ceded to you my friends. The ball is in your court. This country now calls upon you to stand up and do your duty. The power is in your hands.

I thank you.