

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

Highlights:

- *COP Government will provide National Student Cards for free transport, discounted books and computers and cheaper regional travel*
- *Dookeran warns again of Patrick Manning's planned constitution – end to the Privy Council, abolition of judicial reviews and restriction of rights to protest*
- *Says the words of Ken Valley must be taken seriously*
- *Tells of COP plans for urban rebirth in Port of Spain*
- *Reveals plans to develop local entertainment industry; links already made with promoters in Los Angeles, Johannesburg and Mumbai*
- *Says the party will lay first the philosophical guide to COP policy, and then the party's manifesto for Government*
- *Commits to re-awakening the sleeping giant in Laventille and restoring dignity to all residents*

Thank you.

My people of Laventille/Morvant, this is a moment I have been long waiting for.

I have always dreamt that one day in my political life I would be able to come here in Laventille and Morvant and light a spark for the freedom of the people of this area.

And I am pleased, and happy, and proud, that I have come with an enormous team of talent to bring to you a political party – **the Congress of the People – which shall awaken the sleeping giant of Laventille** .

For too long, our people here have been kept in slumber. For too often we have been given false hope about a new future. For the umpteenth time, we have been 'called to the bar' only to find that there is nothing for us in terms of justice.

From today onwards as we set foot here in our first official public meeting for the campaign in Laventille/Morvant, all that is over and you shall now be free. You shall now rise again as a giant in our country.

I say that because when I heard your Member of Parliament to be speak to you saying 'when Laventille rises, so too shall Trinidad and Tobago rise' I remembered the statement I made in Woodford Square not too long ago.

I want to congratulate the two candidates who have offered themselves in service to the people of Laventille and to the service of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

When I listened to Latoya Callender, I have no doubt that we have in our midst a strong, young woman who will stand up for your rights, who will defend your interests and who is motivated by a spiritual dimension to the politics of our country. I am proud that she is a member of the Congress of the People, of which she is a founding member!

And then when I heard David St Clair, with whom I have had a long personal relationship which started in Woodford Square, I say to him my friend, you have now graduated. There is no turning back, you are now committed to service to this country and to the people of Laventille.

So we come here tonight not to bring false promises or to raise hopes we cannot fulfill or to create expectations that we cannot deliver. We have come here tonight to open a new sincere conversation with the people of Laventille/Morvant.

That is the beginning of the new political home you are building. It must start on the foundation of sincerity and trust and that is why I am here tonight.

We open a new conversation with the people, not a conversation that has kept you in servitude, not a conversation that has given you false promises, not a conversation that has not in any way respected your dignity as individuals and as part of our country, not a conversation that looks upon you as voters, but not as people...

We have come now with a new dispensation. In the Congress of the People, one of the most fundamental premises of this new movement is that we shall bring a new energy in Trinidad and Tobago by uniting all of our people.

That is where we are heading. After tonight's meeting, I want you to leave here knowing that all of Trinidad and Tobago are with you in respect, in dignity and in sincerity as we unite our country as we have never united it before.

That will set the basis for finding the solutions to our problems. It must be

based on a sincere conversation. It must be based on a commitment to unite the energies of our country. That is why we cannot afford to have any more Mr Manning and Mr Panday running the affairs of this country. They can only do so if we are divided. Now that we are united, they must step back. They must move out.

For what is now available to us in politics is a united country and no one shall stop us as we move forward.

But why are we uniting with each other? Because we want to solve our problems and we want to be sincere and honest with our people. We want to create an environment here in Laventille/Morvant in which you shall have a future like anyone else in Trinidad and Tobago.

I remember walking through the Beetham not too long ago and seeing in front of a home with some young people a sign which said 'For us the future is cancelled'.

I reflected – why would our young people come to that view in oil rich Trinidad and Tobago?

Then I went to Barrackpore in south Trinidad and there I saw another sign in front of another group of young people. The sign said – 'if you want my vote, you have to pay me \$5000'!

Reflect for a moment my friends. On one side of our country, our young people are saying 'for us the future is cancelled'. On the other side of the country, our young people are saying 'you have to pay me for my vote'.

That is why one of the parties is trying to buy people votes all over the country. But I know that our country will not sell its votes anymore neither here nor there because we want to have a new future and we want to be able to tell our young people that there is a future.

To do that, we are going about this exercise in a most constructive way.

All I can tell you here today is that we shall start this conversation and on November 5th when you declare your freedom here in Laventille and in Morvant, we shall start the journey to bring this part of the country into the mainstream of economic and social life. That is our journey.

You know when I was a young economist, after studying in Canada and returning to Trinidad and Tobago at about 22 years, where did I go for my first job?

The first job I had was in the Economic Planning Division of the Office of the

Prime Minister located in Whitehall and then the Prime Minister was the Right Honourable Dr Eric Williams.

I joined a group of economists – Mr William Demas, a Caribbean Scholar and economist committed to this nation; Mr Frank Rampersad, one of the best economists and loyalists to Trinidad and Tobago; Mr Eugenio Moore, an architect for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I was then a young person working under their pupillage, under the guidance of that great political star.

I must tell you that it was a wonderful feeling. It was a wonderful feeling to come back into my own country and to be working for the development of the nation. And we produced the first five year plan; I did a lot of work in that.

We produced the second five year plan. We produced the third five year plan. And this country was moving into a different road, a different path.

I felt inspired, not only by the work I was doing, but then there was a leadership in that time who was committed to bringing Trinidad and Tobago onto the world map as a small developing country.

Later on in my life, I had to revive the memory of Dr Eric Williams when I went into the Central Bank as Governor. The very party of which he was leader had discontinued the Eric Williams Memorial Lecture Series.

I became the Governor in 1997 and one of the first things I said to my staff then was this was an opportunity lost and I don't why they stopped it. We revived the world famous lectures at the Central Bank under my stewardship.

For five years I tried to perpetuate the scholarship of Dr Williams by bringing international scholars to speak on issues of Caribbean development and Caribbean challenges.

I remember bringing Amartya Sen, a Nobel Prize winner for Economics to come and speak. I remember bringing a professor of political science of international reputation coming to talk to us about identity and its crisis in Trinidad and Tobago.

I remember bringing the head of the International Monetary Fund, at that time to come and talk to us about development challenges.

I remember bringing a professor from Harvard University to talk about diplomacy in small states in the now global environment.

I remember bringing a professor who talked about the politics of societies like ours.

Those are the five international people I brought. I went to the highest level.

I went to the people who had been acknowledged worldwide, brought them in Trinidad and Tobago and in the interest of perpetuating the memory of Eric Williams, brought the scholarship to the highest level at the Central Bank within five years.

I tell you that because today we have found ourselves without any leadership that has a philosophy. One of the first requirements of leadership is that you must have a philosophy about how you govern and why you govern.

Unfortunately, we have now lost that. And Mr Manning has recently produced what we call the Manning draft constitution. You have been hearing about it.

At one time he was claiming that he wanted a two thirds majority to pass this constitution and right now he is saying that this election must give him that.

But I want you to go into the proposals of that constitution. What is the philosophical context in which that constitutional provision has been done? When we look at it we see a number of measures.

He shall abolish the Privy Council. He shall abolish judicial review process to go to the courts to get redress. He shall abolish under certain conditions the right of protest if it is not in the interest of the State. He shall abolish the Office of the President and he shall elect himself as the Executive President without regard to the popular vote of the people – he shall only be appointed on the basis of the election results and by the EBC.

These are ominous signs. Here is a Prime Minister, having built a presidential palace, put in physical support that he requires, refused to put a cent to renovate the President's House and is now building a constitutional structure of which he shall be supreme.

Where is the philosophy of development? Where is the philosophy of democracy? Where is the philosophy of a politics that serves the people?

No wonder his senior Minister recently had the strength and determination to stand up and say Trinidad and Tobago take note, the current Prime Minister has exhibited dictatorial tendencies and now must be stopped and all of Trinidad and Tobago must unite to stop him from bringing our country into a state of anarchy and a state of lawlessness .

I was very generous when I said that Mr Manning has fallen in love with power itself. It might be easy for one to fall in love with power, but if you do that at the expense of the future of people and the next generation then you are committing a cardinal sin in governance.

That is why today I want to tell you that this election is one not only about the change in Government, this is an election about whether we maintain our democracy as we know it or we cede it to those who want to perpetuate themselves in office for all times.

My friends, we have been concerned about how we shall make Laventille rise again. Recently, we unleashed a whole programme which we called the **urban rebirth programme of Trinidad and Tobago**.

A full team has been working on it and we have now devised a whole programme that will encompass the constituencies in Port of Spain and Laventille.

You are not separate from Port of Spain; you are part of the capital of Trinidad and Tobago and you must be treated as citizens of our capital. That is why we have brought together Port of Spain North and South and Laventille West and East and Morvant into one grouping in which we now have a comprehensive urban rebirth plan .

This is that time that we must put that in place. And we know that the young people are those looking for opportunities, so we have developed an entire programme to unearth the talent of our young people.

Many of our young people were not able to gain a proper education by the system of education we have. They are left out and exposed, with no protection, with no economic opportunities, but they have shared talents.

Many of them have talent in the field of culture, music, sports and leisure. Many have talents in the performing arts. There are parts of this world in which that talent has great economic value .

That is why I have been in touch with many entertainers and promoters. And they have given me the assurance that if there is a supporting policy framework that they will make the necessary connections with the entertainment centres in Los Angeles, Johannesburg and Mumbai to link it with the entertainment centre that we must develop in Trinidad and Tobago and use the talent of our young people. It is part of our new thrust that we must capture that spirit.

I understand that De Fosto is here – he is an inspiration to exactly what I am saying!

We have developed what I call the 'Directions for the Future'. And within that we have developed an entire programme dealing with sports and culture in Trinidad and Tobago. Within that we have also developed a Youth Policy. And there are many provisions.

I must pay tribute to the Youth Congress; I see one of the members in the

audience, Ashaki Scott. Thank you for the work you and Valini Pundit have done. They have developed this and it is now adopted.

This Friday we shall be laying out first of two documents for the election campaign. The first will be the Directions for the Future which will give you the underlying philosophical context in which we shall govern .

One of the policies which I will announce here today on the youth policy is that the Congress of the People shall introduce a National Student Card which will allow free bus transit to all students, discounts on books, stationery, computer equipment and regional travel!

The Congress of the People is based on a solid philosophical foundation. It is not a Government that you will put into place that has gone wild with power and will be in love with power for itself. The Congress of the People will be a government that will locate its actions for the development of the people and the nation.

That is why I remember my early days under the leadership of Dr Eric Williams, because that is what motivated me to stay in Trinidad and Tobago as I have done.

We were motivated to develop 1.3 million people to develop Trinidad and Tobago.

So we will be talking about the issues. Tonight is but the beginning. For the last few months, I have been walking throughout the country with a number of my colleagues. I have felt the sense of neglect.

I have seen the expression of the creativity of the people of Laventille. I have seen the homes you built in very difficult circumstances on your own by walking up the hills and carrying with you the materials and water to make it happen.

And the people do not even have a community centre to hold a meeting! Very basic things...if you want a community to live and live on its own, you have to give it the very basic things and the people shall do the rest.

I know you who are here today are ready to take on the challenge and move forward. All you want is a sincere Government committed to you, providing the basics.

So I want to urge you, as I said I have been waiting for this day as it has always been deep inside me. I know that the spark is now going to be created because Laventille will rise as it has never risen before.

We in the Congress of the People as reflected here tonight are committed to creating a united country in which you shall have an equal place from now on.

Thank you very much.