

**STATEMENT BY WINSTON DOOKERAN
POLITICAL LEADER, CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE
AT A MASS PUBLIC MEETING IN PRINCES TOWN
MONDAY 15 OCTOBER 2007**

My friends, this is a touching moment. When I came here I was introduced to two ladies who are on the platform with me here tonight – Lilawatee Deokee Maharaj on my extreme right and Violent Bassant right here next to me.

What was touching about their presence here today is the fact that they came here since 2 o'clock this afternoon for this meeting here tonight and I want you to thank them.

Thank you very much for your loyalty and support.

My friends, it is for people like these ladies and the many thousands of others that we in the Congress of the People have put forth one of the most innovative plans for pension reform in Trinidad and Tobago.

In that plan we have said that everyone above the age of 60 shall be eligible for a decent pension in Trinidad and Tobago. No longer will people of that age have to go to the offices of Government to establish their eligibility because they as a matter of right shall be entitled to pension.

You will hear more of that when you hear about our proposals in the not too distant future.

But today I want to say when I heard Mervyn Assam here tonight, I became spellbound. For here is a man of wisdom, a man who has served this nation for so long and so well, has come here to give you advice. Not only those of you who are here, but throughout Trinidad and Tobago that when you have a choice between the old and the past and you have a choice between the dynamic and the future there is only one way to go and that is the dynamic and the future.

Thank you Mervyn!

And I want to thank him for taking on this fight in San Fernando East. I give you the assurance here today, as the people of this land come together as they have never done before that Mervyn Assam shall bring an upset victory.

My friends, I have been advised to keep my speeches a bit shorter to preserve my voice for the 20 days to come. But before I do that, I want to say that today, 41 candidates of the Congress of the People were nominated for the November 5th general elections.

In 20 days' time, there shall be a new Government in Trinidad and Tobago.

And I want to echo the call of that learned former Speaker of the House, Nizam Mohammed, who said to you that this is serious business about your future, your children's future and the country's democracy.

And we have come to you not to ask you to vote for a symbol; we are asking you to vote for people – FOR PEOPLE!

You see there are those who have the audacity to say 'forget the candidates, only look at the symbol'. He is insulting the intelligence of the people of our country.

And the candidates that we have put forth have become a formidable team. Look at all 41 candidates. They represent the diversity of Trinidad and Tobago. They incorporate people from all walks of life.

We have put together one of the most dynamic political teams today. Not only is it better than what I see there – the rainbow hall – it is the rainbow team for Trinidad and Tobago.

There is a lot of talk about three parties fighting this election. The PNM is a party of over 50 years. And the Congress of the People is a party of only one year. David and Goliath!

We have now earned the respect of the entire Caribbean. All those who look at events in Trinidad and Tobago from the capitals of the world; they have been amazed, they have been bewildered, they have been astonished to see what you the people here and everywhere have done in the last year and created the first party of Trinidad and Tobago.

And it is this very first party that will rise to the occasion and shock the world. It has already put Mr Manning in panic and he continues to panic in every moves he makes because he has been shocked by the power of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Tonight, as I stand here on the platform of Dr Navi Muradali, I know in my heart that this is a new future leader of Trinidad and Tobago, following in the footsteps of his very distinguished father who was one of our leaders during the independence period – Mr Nazim Muradali who I see here tonight.

And as I stand here on the platform of Desmond Lambert; when I went to Desmond I asked if he would come and join us. He first said that he is no politician, and all he knows is about police work. He was the Assistant Commissioner of Police and he had just retired. And we began to talk and one day he came back to me and he said, 'you know something, the best politicians are not those who go up for elections, the best politicians are those who can do something for the nation'.

And it is that statement of his that led us to walk together so that today, he realises he wants to do something for his nation in the critical area of crime, safety and security and to do that, he must get involved in the politics of the country and he is here with us to be your next Member of Parliament for Princes Town South/Tableland.

Rekha Ramjit played an important role in shaping the constitution of this party. Mr Manning has a constitution which his party members say he is not following at all! And Kamla Persad Bissessar talks about her party and given what they have done to her, she realised that they don't even have a constitution.

But Rekha was instrumental in putting forward a solid, democratic constitution for your party and now she stands here as the Member of Parliament to be for Naparima.

My friends, those are only three members of this formidable team. The names of others have been introduced, but I want to challenge anyone in this country to be able to stand up and admit that the Congress of the People has the most powerful group of candidates that will be your next Government in Trinidad and Tobago.

We stand to the scrutiny of this nation. We stand totally open, not only because of our team, but also because of our programme for action.

I want to spend just a few minutes on two areas in which we have to do something dramatic.

The first is on the issue of safety and security. For six years, the Government has had over \$200 billion. They have spent much of it on all sorts of things, yet we know what we are facing in our land. When law enforcement has broken down, when the criminal justice system is in disarray and this has been admitted by the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Attorney General.

The Community Policing idea, which will be our instrument to engage the people, never got off the ground under this Government.

I want to tell you that our team, our team has been working for the last year and in that team are many individuals whose track record cannot be questioned in terms of the service to the people of our land.

Leading that team is our good friend and very solid person in the area of law and criminology and he is now our candidate in St Ann's East, Gary Griffith.

And with him are the former Ministers of National Security, Brigadier Joseph Theodore and Joseph Toney.

Gillian Lucky, you know her well, she is a member of that team. Desmond Lambert has joined us on that team. And more recently, a gentleman of long-standing contribution to this country whose expertise is in the field of criminal justice came to me and he has joined our platform. He is now in different parts of the country and is helping me in St Augustine as well – Vernon de Lima.

As we tackle the problem of crime, as we tackle the problem of law enforcement, as we tackle the problem of restoring the criminal justice system in our country, we have the most formidable team of people with track records who shall get the job done and get it done quickly.

I give you the assurance that this will be priority number one in your Government of the Congress of the People.

So we can walk the streets again with the same freedom and love as we did before so we can go home and not have to put burglar bars all over our homes.

I want to tell you that I am confident that we have the team, we have the proposals and we have the will to do it. And as your next leader in Government, **I want to tell you here today that my highest priority for Trinidad and Tobago is to make this country safe again !**

And the other issue I want to touch on is the issue of agriculture. Agriculture has been left to die and today, agriculture remains a neglected part of our economy. I have spoken at length in Chaguanas about our plan for the re-engineering of the sugarcane industry. We have a document on that and I won't take the time here to go over it.

But beyond that, we have a plan for the vendors of our country. The vendors in our markets and all over...

We believe that for too long, they have been working for very hard without reaping the rewards of their work. They have to work under very trying conditions. I have visited almost all the markets in the country and I see the conditions in which our people have to work.

They are some of the hardest working groups in our society. When the matter of food prices came up in Parliament, do you know what Mr Manning and his Ministers said, they started to blame the vendors. And I couldn't believe it that they were the Government of all the people and they were blaming the vendors for high prices.

We have a total plan that we have worked up for the modernization of all the markets of Trinidad and Tobago and the creation of good conditions for the vendors in our society. I advise you to learn more about it.

What that also tells me is that when we get there, the Minister of Finance of our Government will not be allowed to spend all the money on tall buildings, because his first priority will have to be the little people of our country.

I give you that assurance here today! We will change the order of expenditure so that the little people in our country – whether the farmers, vendors, taxi-drivers, CEPEP or URP workers – they shall be given first priority. If this country has to have a sense of development the little people must benefit.

My friends, all of these we have worked out already, but I want to give you an idea as to the directions for the future.

So this election is not to be taken lightly. A great opportunity has suddenly come once more to our nation. Someone said here tonight that we must unite this country as we did in 1986. But I am here to tell you that not only shall we unite the country, but we shall make sure that the little people in our country get their fair share in this land.

There is too much money that we have had at our disposal and we are not sharing it with the little people. And your Government has been denying us the information we seek.

A report that was done on poverty by the European Commission, I have been trying to get it but they refuse to allow us to see it. They have denied us information on the Ryder Scott report on gas and the future of the country.

They have denied us information on the price of gas which they are negotiating with the international companies for their so-called aluminium smelter plants.

They are denying us information so they can keep the people in darkness and they shall have all the money at their disposal. But I say here tonight that in the same way we have had our festivals over the years of darkness, and out of that darkness comes the light so too now they cannot keep us in darkness anymore because the light is shining.

So let me warn you. This election can either go one way or the other. If you can live with having Manning and Panday in Government, then it goes that way. If you want to have a new Government and Prime Minister, then you have to go this way!

And to do that, we must bring about a one-to-one fight in Trinidad and Tobago. MANOS, MANOS!

We must bring about a one-to-one fight against the Government. There may be three parties, but the only party that can effectively challenge the PNM today is the Congress of the People!

Some who are asking you to vote for their symbols rather than their people are fighting hard to remain in Opposition. I want to ask you here today – are you my friends ready to be in Government? Are you ready to be in support of change in our country? Are you ready to elect a new Prime Minister in Trinidad and Tobago?

There is only one choice, walk throughout the country wherever you are and tell all those who have not heard the message that for a new Government, there must be a one-to-one fight. Let us unite as a people and remove Mr Manning from office.

Thank you very much and we move forward!