

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

Thank you very much my friends.

Are you ready for a Congress of the People Government?

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

The time has come...

About one year ago, the entire country felt that we had had it. There was no hope. Mr Manning had entrenched himself. He had at his disposal billions and billions of dollars. He had the entire country under his grip by giving them little jobs here and there. And he had the whole country feeling that there was no hope.

We began believing we were once more in the era where the PNM and Mr Manning would remain there forever. Remember that? One year ago, that was the feeling. And we then in the Opposition saw that the only way we can challenge this and be able to create an opportunity for the people was to transform the United National Congress in order to make it a genuine national party.

Today, the result of that effort is that you now have the Congress of the People as the only genuine national party. Because if you cannot create a national party, you will remain forever in Opposition.

I want you to listen here in Barrackpore, in Naparima, in Oropouche...we have been here in Opposition for too long. Twice, we got the chance to get out of Opposition and form the Government and went back into Opposition.

Remember that? In 1986, you put us into Government and there was a little provocation and your leaders then left the Government and went back into Opposition.

In 1995, you again put them in Government and by 2001, they broke up and went back into Opposition. I say that these fellows like Opposition too much!

In fact, in this election and in any election, you go to the electorate to win an election. When you fight an election, you must have as your purpose to form the Government, or else there is no point fighting the election.

And to go into Government, there are certain things you have to do. But the important thing is that you must want to go into Government.

I saw an ad today on the newspaper by the UNC. It is not the UNC Alliance, because the alliance has already left the UNC. So don't let them fool you about that.

And hear what this ad says; it is trying to humiliate me and the COP. But we are not to be humiliated. You know that anything they throw at me, I could stand up. They can keep throwing it and I can keep standing up. And they can keep throwing it and I will always stand up in your defence.

But hear what this ad says. I want you, when you get a chance, to look at it.

It says that 'on November 6th, if a united Opposition is not in power, then Manning will be'.

The UNC is fighting an election and they are admitting that they cannot win Government! They are publicly admitting that they cannot be in Government! And they expect the people of this country to come out and vote them back into Opposition!

My friends, I say to you that from now on and from this election, Opposition is something we shall never see, we are here to take you back into the Government !

I want you to ask your Members of Parliament – is Opposition so sweet for them? Do they really enjoy Opposition? You know one or two of them told me that Opposition is the best thing because they don't have to take responsibility to solve the problems of their constituents, all they can do is to go and talk and when the people ask, they say 'boy I am in Opposition and I can do no more'.

And your Member of Parliament has been telling you that for the last five or more years here, because they love Opposition and I ask you here today – are you prepared to go into Government in Trinidad and Tobago.

That is the choice you are facing today. But the contempt they have for the people, they put up candidates that are not even eligible to be candidates.

You see the controversy that has emerged where some of their candidates are people with dual citizenship. Everyone knows that to be a Member of Parliament, which is the body in our Government that will have to uphold our sovereignty, you must be a person who has only Trinidad and Tobago citizenship.

But they have so much contempt for the people that they have put up candidates who are not only citizens of this country. I have here a

document that establishes clearly what the laws are and why they have to be so.

But you know the truth is that they couldn't find candidates so they had to take anyone who came! And while they were searching to put just about anybody as candidates, we had a group of people lining up to become candidates of the Congress of the People and you have seen some of them here today.

And when the Chairman told you that we have the best team and you must scrutinize our team, we stand here proud and confident and when the people scrutinize our team, they will come to one conclusion and one conclusion only, it is the Congress of the People that has the people to run the affairs of the country.

In this very ad, they ended up by saying 'COP supporters, do not split the vote, our future is at stake'. That is the UNC saying that.

The issue my friends, is not splitting the vote, the issue is are you prepared to WASTE your vote! ARE YOU PREPARED TO WASTE YOUR VOTE ON A PARTY THAT PUBLICLY ADMITS THAT IT CANNOT FORM GOVERNMENT!

When your Member of Parliament comes to you and asks for your vote, ask him, is he saying as his party has said, they cannot form Government, why are you asking me for my vote?

It is not a poll that said that, it is the party itself admitted in a paid announcement that they cannot form the Government.

My friends I want to tell you here today, we have been crisscrossing this country for a long time and in fact, I have to leave shortly and I seek your permission, because I have to go to Rio Claro for the second meeting tonight.

We have two national meetings every night and hundreds of others at the local level. We have now found that the people have a great thirst, they want to hear our programmes, they want to hear what is in store and they want to be able to rise with the new Trinidad and Tobago.

There is no doubt in my mind, when I see what is happening in the east/west corridor...last night I was in Arouca and then I went to St Joseph and prior to that we were in the Croisee and tomorrow morning we shall be in Port of Spain South because what is happening and what is getting Manning very panicky is that he knows the Congress of the People is infiltrating the votes on the east/west corridor.

And for the first time, this party in Opposition to the PNM is penetrating its very heart. He knows it! That is why today the press called me for a

comment on what Manning is alleged to have said 'housing is more important than crime'.

My comment was 'life is more important than shelter'. If you as a Prime Minister is saying that housing is more than crime, you are saying that you have put a higher value to putting people in houses without regard to keeping them alive. That is the kind of panic statements he makes, saying it doesn't matter if you are kidnapped, if you are murdered or if you are robbed, housing is more important.

We know housing is extremely important, but the value that you put to life is supreme, there is no other function that a Government perform that is more important than to make life safe and secure for all citizens. If you cannot do that, there is no sense talking about other things.

They are panicking in the east/west corridor and later this week, I will be going to Sangre Grande where we have one of our most fiery women candidates in Dr Lena Brereton Wolffe who assured me last night that there is no doubt in her mind that the constituency of Toco/Sangre Grande is in the hands of the COP.

You want to form Government? You can't form Government by staying in Opposition. You could only form Government if you beat the PNM on the east/west corridor and that is what we intend to do.

So I want you here to ask your Member of Parliament, is he coming to ask you for your vote to remain in Opposition for another five years where they have no responsibility and they can sit back with ease and just talk and complain?

My friends, the PNM and Mr Manning blames everyone. He blames the poor vendors in the markets when the prices of food rise. They got up in Parliament and blamed the vendors!

Then when you ask them the cause of their failures, they blame everyone!

My friends, we are not here to blame. We are not here to do as the UNC and complain about the PNM. We are here to remove the PNM and to construct a new society in Trinidad and Tobago.

That is why you have to fight this election with brain power. I know you understand it, if you don't have brain power, if you do not know how to undo the PNM, if you do not know how to create panic in their camp, if you cannot use your brain to fight the PNM, you will remain in Opposition.

Ask your Member of Parliament whether he is asking you to vote for Opposition. Politics is about the future and about how to solve your

problems. Politics my friends is about giving people power to solve problems.

So I want you to spread the message. Their day has come and gone; it is now our time and our charge to move ahead.

I want to also tell you here tonight that while the PNM is panicking in the east/west corridor as the votes begin to come to us and we can walk throughout those constituencies with our heads held high ... we will see some upset victories in the north ... the sweetest upset victory will be when Mervyn Assam defeats Patrick Manning in San Fernando East.

That is the sweetest upset victory that is coming. You see what I say you have to fight this election with your brain? It is not a simple coincidence – that strategic move to put this solid patriot who has had a great track record as a Minister. He has always fought for the rights of people, a former Ambassador, and I thank him for agreeing to come and fight Patrick Manning in his own backyard is but the best move that we have made in this election.

I understand from Mervyn that Patrick Manning is now spending the whole day walking in San Fernando East, because he is being attacked directly at the centre because we intend to get rid of Patrick Manning and his Government. We are not here to keep you in Opposition.

I want you to go home and tell your friends and family that this is the time we have been waiting for. We have outlined the first set of documents regarding our policy positions.

I want you to read it and become familiar with it, and there will be more.

Tonight, you have a battery of speakers who will be able to take you into all the areas of solutions. What I want you to do at the end of it is to leave here with the determination that in the next few days you have now a great opportunity which appeared dim a year ago.

And in the next few days, we have to walk throughout this country and get all the people to come together and be able to unite.

When they talk about unity, they talking about unity with the footballer. Do you think I want to be under his Prime Ministership? That is what they are talking about. They want me to be under the Prime Ministership of this footballer.

My friends, all I will tell you is that I would rather come to you as a humble person than to allow myself to be a subject to the Prime Ministership of the footballer. He has bought the party and he is attempting to buy people with entertainment.

So today, having bought the party he is now making the UNC the best entertainment club there is in Trinidad and Tobago. Enjoy yourselves with the entertainment, enjoy yourselves, if he can bring down all these international stars for your enjoyment at his cost and the cost of FIFA – an international body interfering in the affairs of Trinidad and Tobago – enjoy it.

But when you go to the polls, get serious and put men and women you can trust to run the affairs of this country.

You have to make sure that you do not lose this chance. If you lose this chance to go back into Government, it will take another generation of 30 years to make it possible. Listen to me, this is an opportunity that we must take and we only have a few days.

Let us not lose that chance!

Thank you very much...