

**STATEMENT BY WINSTON DOOKERAN
POLITICAL LEADER, CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE
AT A PUBLIC MEETING IN CHARLIEVILLE
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Thank you very much my friends in Charlieville.

The first time I mounted a political platform some 26 years ago it was at this very spot here in Pierre Road, Chaguanas.

Vishnu Tikasingh will know what I am talking about, as Azad Abass Ali will know.

So I have come back here now to lead you into the next Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is you who gave birth to this possibility and when I look around and I see the faces, I met many of my friends of those years past. But what is appealing now is that I am seeing so many young people here today.

The young people are taking over this party and I invite you young people, let us take over our country...because we cannot leave it to those who have failed us and failed us so miserably.

I was in Port of Spain south earlier this evening where we launched a very dynamic programme called the Urban Rebirth Programme and I made the statement there that we now consider the Laventille area as part of the new capital city of Trinidad and Tobago.

We mean real change and someone from the audience told me that the PNM is standing up on one leg only, they have always got the support of the people but right now they only have one leg. They said if you push them a little bit in the next few days, they will fall. So they are about to fall, but they have one leg.

And then I went to St Helena and that was a wonderful explosion; it reminded me of the political unity of 1986. It is happening again, it is happening in our country.

I always had faith in the intelligence of our people. I always knew that our people's collective wisdom would always get us through. I always knew that some would try to buy you, some might try to give you cellphones, some might try to give you music. But when it comes to elections, you know what to do! This is a serious matter!

And they tell me that group is coming to the people and there's a football man in charge who bought over the party and they have two heads.

So in one party, they have one foot and this football party has two heads! What I am giving you in Trinidad and Tobago, and what we in the Congress of the People are giving you is a party with one head and two feet!

So this is a fully grown party that has now come, within one year, to create a new political history.

My friends, change is what we are about. Everywhere I go, this country is crying out for change. And that change is a change from many things.

One of the things people are calling out for is a change against Mr Manning as Prime Minister who has been accused by his own party members of dictatorial tendencies. You must not take that lightly.

When a man who sits next to you for 20 years decides he will now make a public statement and says that the Prime Minister has dictatorial tendencies, it is serious.

Then we found this draft constitution which to date, Mr Manning has not denied that it exists, nor whether he is the author. We know that this is his thinking, because this is what he has been saying for a long time.

And in it he has a provision in which he shall abolish the Office of President and he shall make himself the Executive President. But, even if he were to do that, he would not become Executive President on the will of the people, it is the party that will choose who the Executive President will be and he would have ultimate power.

So even if you say you want an Executive President, the people cannot give up their right to elect such a person. And this is what is in store.

There is also the provision to abolish the Privy Council which is what gives you the right to have redress when the Government abuses its power, and he wants to abolish that.

These are serious situations. So when you talk about change, you are talking about preventing Mr Manning from having a free hand to create a dictatorship in Trinidad and Tobago.

On the one hand, we have that. On the other hand, we have this football man who is using an international sporting agency that has had a dubious record on the issue of ethics. Everyone knows that.

They are now interfering in the politics of Trinidad and Tobago by bringing a lot of money here to change people's minds. They are attacking our sovereignty as a people.

Self determination is something we must not just give away, because when you give away your right to self determination you are giving away your freedom and your democracy.

So I want to warn you that with the one legged party in Government and the two-headed leader of the party in Opposition, on the one hand you have an attack on democracy, and on the hand you have an attack on our sovereignty.

That is why a few of them who have dual citizenship can boast about it! Imagine that, they are boasting that they have dual citizenship – to hell with the people they say, we will fight!

According to our laws, you cannot be in the elected Chamber if you have more than one allegiance, because if there ever was a conflict between the two countries, you must have no question about it, your allegiance must be to one and one only. And when you are in the Parliament, your allegiance must be to Trinidad and Tobago.

So I could not believe my ears when I heard people talking about this. How much can we take my friends? How much can we take when our democracy, our sovereignty and our Parliament are all being maneuvered?

And that is why I say we are here tonight because I feel here the unity of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the recreation of the spirit of 1986, the bringing together of our nation so that we can take back control.

You know, to beat the PNM, you must use your brain. Because they have money, they use it and they have power, they abuse it! But they use the money and abuse power to stay in power. So you cannot just wish you could get them out, you have to construct a plan.

You know, they know me as the planner. I planned the economy once and I am planning the politics now!

And today we have assembled a team that all of Trinidad and Tobago are proud of. Have you ever seen a team like that? Diverse, young!

And today, we have one of the stalwarts of Trinidad and Tobago politics, someone who has never deviated from her goal to serve the people. I remember the Guaymare residents, when the Government was trying to bulldoze them, I was then your MP and I remember meeting this person's father.

I say here publicly that one of the persons who inspired me most to have strength inside is Hulsie Bhaggan's father. And she has inherited that, because her strength come from within her – her desire to serve the people.

And then you heard Mr Manohar Ramsaran speak with you hear today, a man who in the middle of all that he has done in the last five years, was able to go to the University and graduate with an MBA. I salute him here tonight.

He is committed to the people, everyone knows that. But you know something? Among Mr Ramsaran, Hulsie Bhaggan and myself, we have been your three members of Parliament for the past almost 30 years.

I was the first in the 1980s. Hulsie became the second in the 1990s. And Manohar became the third in the mid- 1990s. And if you are talking about unity, you have unity here in Chaguanas.

That is why I understand they told you about what we did in Government and Opposition in the past. I understand you know the history of Divali Nagar and how it happened. You know the history of the ASJA Educational Complex and how it happened. You know the history of the Fire Station which the people were calling for and how it happened. You know the history of this sporting facility in Pierre Road and how it happened.

All that happened while we were in only MPs. Could you imagine what would happen if I came to you as one of these three people, as the next Prime Minister of this country?

With the strength of your representatives who have never failed you, they have always stayed on the side of what is right.

So I ask you today, are you prepared for this change? Are you prepared for a Government of the Congress of the People?

Are you prepared to elect a new Prime Minister who started his career right here in Chaguanas?

My friends, this is where we are today. But I want to tell you, there is some who have gotten accustomed to Opposition. They love it like you wouldn't believe.

I want to ask you here today, the choice you make in change and for all those who have been in the PNM, the time has come for them to put their allegiance to the party as second to their allegiance to the country.

And for those who continue to support the UNC, I tell them – do what Chaguanas always does and make the difference between right and wrong. Support what is right and destroy what is wrong.

That is what Pundit Satyanand Mahabir told me when I went into Pierre Road Temple – that righteousness comes when you defend what is right. Even

though some times it might be your best friend who is wrong, you must stand up for what is right.

So my friends, it is 11 days to go for us to have freedom in Trinidad and Tobago. It is 11 days to go when this country shall unite. I know that the country will always unite, once they have the righteousness of the leadership in their side.

What unites people is not people! What unites people is purity and righteousness of purpose.

And I have faith in that. That is why for the last year when they tried to humiliate me and they tried to destroy me and my character, I will tell you here today that that is impossible to do because the people are with me today!

I say they put out a whole page ad with a child's face, addressed to me. It says 'dear granddad Winston'. These knife and fork politicians don't realise that my grandchildren call me Ajah!

And then they went on to say 'we cannot win this election, but blame Dookeran for it' and they tell their people that in the ad. The election has not come yet, but they have already decided that they cannot win the election but they still coming to you for your vote.

Are they insulting the intelligence of our people? They are telling you 'we cannot win, but vote for us'. Are you going to vote for someone to go back into Opposition? Or do you want to vote for people who will win the election and put you in Government?

I want you to carry that message wide, everywhere, because this is the chance that may not come back, at least for a generation.

Young Valini Pundit who was only nine years old in 1991 may have to fight with her colleagues to bring back this chance later on.

So the three issues in this election are:

We want to vote for change; a change in policies, a change in people and a change in approach and bringing back good governance to our country.

The second issue is character. We want to build back the national character of Trinidad and Tobago. We want to be able to say that you elect us to go with Parliament and deal with Parliament.

Not like the fellow from Fyzabad who pelt a teacup against the other fellow from Diego Martin and they prepared a big book about that! It cost a lot of

money talking about the teacup. That is what they were doing there and I kept quiet because I thought it was absurd, it was madness!

The Parliament was reduced to deciding who pelt who with a teacup! And I should bring the report and show you – the Parliament wasted its time.

What the Parliament will do when you put us there and produce reports will be to improve the welfare of the people of our country. That is what we will do.

So my friends, we can do what we wish here. We can provide you with the programmes. We have already done that with the new directions. Tomorrow we shall be launching our manifesto, we have all the things we will do. We are not afraid we are putting it out in public.

So when people tell you this is the third party, tell them no – we are in fact the first party of Trinidad and Tobago today and they are second and third.

And I say to the media, give us fair coverage; that is all we ask! Give us fair coverage.

But the power lies in you. I can give you whatever ideas we have for change. We can offer to you this formidable team that is here today and is elsewhere in the country. We can build the organisation and today we are the fastest growing political party in the Caribbean.

But now the third issue. That is the chance you have now. I want you to understand that it takes a lot of get a chance, to break down the empire of Mr Manning. It cannot happen just like that, you have to use your head, you have to use your brain, you have to use strategy, you have to know what you're doing.

That is why when he is firing blank shots about Caroni, I don't have to reply to him because he will not be there to do anything about it. We can only tell you what WE will do.

But he is firing those blank shots because he wants to raise a debate in the country and I am telling you that I will resist that at all times because I am here to unite this nation!

I will not fall for the traps. They say the UNC Alliance, but the Alliance fall of the UNC a long time now. And the trap they were setting for me so that I could go under Jack Warner, I will not fall for that.

And I won't fall for Manning's strategy now to try and stir emotions about Caroni when he and others destroyed. He is trying to raise the racial bar because that's the only way he can stay in office.

But he has something coming for him because the politics in the east/west corridor is moving and moving with the Congress of the People.

Let me end here tonight by thanking you for staying so late, for hearing our speakers and by letting you know that this chance comes but once in a generation.

Don't waste this chance. If you waste it, it will take another generation to get it back. Don't waste this chance!

I call upon you in Chaguanas to join with us, take the chance, bring about the change and put national character back in Trinidad and Tobago.

It's all in your hands, you have the power, it is now up to you.

Thank you very much.