



ARTHUR N.R. ROBINSON

In 1990, someone was holding members of the elected government of Trinidad and Tobago as hostages in the Parliament building. The army had surrounded the building but did not know what they wanted to do. Inside, the abused Prime Minister was commanded by this person to hand over the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr Chancellor, I hope that if I had been present in the Chamber none of the words 'panic', 'hysteria' or 'reflex' would have come to me. I hope I would have recognised the call to the army to 'Attack with full force' as the ultimate in the giving of self and the most appropriate act in defence of the people and the constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. "Attack with full force" Mr Chancellor. Nothing done or said before or after by friend or foe can take away from the patriotism and courage and rightness of the response.

Mr Chancellor,

It is my privilege to present His Excellency Arthur N.R. Robinson, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I do not have to remind you that he was Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago from 1986 to 1991.

I do not have to tell you that he was the Parliamentary Representative for Tobago East from 1961 to 1971, from 1976 to

1980 and from 1986 to 1997; and first Chairman of the restored Tobago House of Assembly from 1980 to 1986.

I do not have to inform you that he was a member of the Federal Parliament of the West Indies from 1958 to 1961 and has been involved in Parliamentary life in Trinidad and Tobago for forty years.

What these things allow us to affirm, Mr Chancellor, is that Mr Robinson is a Caribbean man ("Independence has no real meaning for us unless it is related to the fate of our brothers and sisters all over the Caribbean"), a federalist and West Indian, a proven champion of Trinidad and Tobago, and of course a concerned Tobagonian.

Mr Chancellor, ANR Robinson has been relentless and formidably thorough in his determination that Tobago should not be short-changed in its relationship with Trinidad, and in his sincere wish that the unitary state shall prevail. He has looked at the yoking in 1888 of two failed or failing colonies by their respective "owners" and he has followed the vagaries of the union down through the years in the pages of many books and observed the consequences, until the time when he himself became a witness and chief participant.

He has had to come out hard on Tobago's behalf, and it was he who moved the motion in 1977 calling for internal self-government for Tobago, not in the spirit of a self-seeking brigand but in the injured tones of a partner seeking amelioration. The establishment of mutually acceptable terms between Trinidad and Tobago would provide a model and would augur well for attempts to establish unity beyond the unitary state: "A unity not based on justice, on human rights and on realism, is not real unity and will not last. What the motion seeks is an enduring unity, a framework which could establish an acceptable model for unity in the Caribbean as a whole."

There has never been for him any essential conflict between his several identities and vocations. The rich interplay between them and the movements of mind by which he has been driven all his life to respond and keep pace with them make him the sort of person and the kind of thinker we must be proud to haul in as one of our own.

Mr Chancellor, President Robinson has been honoured with the Award of the Order of the Caribbean Community for distinguished service to the Caribbean region; he is a holder of the Trinity Cross, the highest national award of Trinidad and Tobago; and he received in 1997 the 'Defender of Democracy' Award from Parliamentarians for Global Action at the United Nations in recognition of his commitment and action to advance International Criminal Justice and the Rule of Law.

One of the participants at the Diplomatic Conference held in Rome this year wrote to him in appreciation of his "important humanitarian contribution" and the part he played over several decades in helping to move the International community toward a more humane world legal order: "When the room burst into wild applause late Friday night on June 17 in Rome, I thought what a pity that you were not there. Surely, the overwhelming adoption of a statute that begins 'an international Criminal Court is hereby established is a unique historical event. Never before in human history has there been such a declaration. How does it feel to know that without your personal initiative it would not have happened?"

Mr Chancellor, Arthur Napoleon Raymond spent his childhood in the fishing village of Castara under the supervision of his father who was a preacher in the local Church and headmaster of the Methodist Primary School. "In my youthful days I considered the choice of being a Minister of religion. The reason why I did not adopt this course is that I felt it did not involve sufficient social action. I saw myself as engineering social action which I felt society needed."

He opened the batting for Bishop's High School and played at left-half on the football team but was not fought over by Aston Villa or Manchester United. In the English exam for the Cambridge School Certificate he chose to write a short story suggested by the following poem: "The moon is up, the stars are bright/ The wind is fresh and free/ We're out to sail for gold tonight/ Across the silver sea". The teacher who probably did not like pirates or the poem deemed him a fool who was sure to fail but he got a distinction and a House Scholarship. At the Higher School Certificate he got distinctions in Latin but sail as he might on the silver sea Geography was his downfall. He had been taking in a sound colonial education. Not winning the island scholarship meant taking up a job as a clerk in the public service.

By 1949 Mr Chancellor, the determined young man had completed the Bachelor of Law Degree as an external student of London University. He then made his journey to an expectation, arriving in London and passing the Bar Final Examinations of the Inner Temple in 1953. Two years later he completed an Honours degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, impressing his peers as one of the best debaters at the Oxford Union and getting written up in *Isis* as "possessing a mind of a refreshingly high quality." At Oxford, the President of John's College (of which he was made an honorary Fellow in 1988) asked him if, like Napoleon, he was anti-British.

It was almost a good question. He was ready for them. If a sound colonial education doesn't turn you into a mimic man, Mr Chancellor, it gives you all the instruments to be anti-colonial.

Mr Chancellor, I have been tracing the education of an intellectual: a person who brings to bear on specific problems in his society knowledge, training and above all the quality of thought. The purpose of this kind of intellectual, sometimes called the traditional intellectual, is to describe and analyse the problems of his/her society and propose solutions and courses of action. His books *The Mechanics of Independence* (1971) and *Caribbean Man: Selected Speeches from a Political Career 1960-1986* (1986) reflect his disposition as an intellectual and account for the causes he has espoused, the actions he has advocated, and the programmes he has devised.

These books continue to speak to our saddening condition-loss of autonomy, cultural denudation, the poverty of the mass, not enough emphasis on savings, failure to develop local investment and sustainable local production, being outmanoeuvred by foreign countries and the funding agencies, loss of foreign revenues, and over-reliance on foreign investors: "I must emphasise that I do believe that foreign enterprise has its part to play in Trinidad and Tobago and it will be short-sighted and in fact foolish to seek to discourage foreign enterprise and capital at this particular time. At the same time I must emphasise that it is equally foolish and equally short-sighted not to recognise the fact that it is of even greater importance to encourage domestic capital and domestic enterprise, and it is equally foolish and equally shortsighted not to recognise the implications of foreign dominance over a large section of the economy."

Almost immediately upon his return from Oxford he met with Dr Eric Williams and became a founding member and first Treasurer of the People's National Movement (PNM). He lost narrowly to the legendary A.P.T. James in the elections of 1956, but two years later he beat the veteran to enter the Federal Parliament. Mr Chancellor, one of his major preoccupations was regional integration in the Caribbean (Trinidad and Tobago; the wider Caribbean; or the English-speaking territories) and in a 1967 address to the PNM Youth League he pointed to the wound inflicted upon the future by the sabotage of the Federation: "Many of us had hoped that by a Federation of the West Indies, we would have been able to develop a centre of authority and rational planning that would have provided a more realistic framework within which our problems could be solved." But the Federation was allowed to sink, and young people of the region were in danger of losing their birthright. Much later, as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago he still carried the dream, and he pushed for the West Indian Commission which was mandated under your chairmanship Mr Chancellor to chart the future course of our region.

It is no secret Mr Chancellor that many citizens wondered how possible it would be for a practising politician to move without pause from the partisan politics of the House of Representatives to the Presidency which in our jurisdiction requires the incumbent not only to be above politics and resistant to political pressure but also to be there for all citizens and groups, for every creed and race. It is well known Mr Chancellor that Mr Robinson had had more than his share of political war.

He had become disenchanted with Williams and critical of the PNM. He spoke out against his party's Public Order Act of 1970 and campaigned nation-wide against it. He resigned from the PNM and declared his intention to go to his constituents and tell them of his decision to give up his seat. He called on the Prime Minister to resign, put in an interim Government and set a date for elections. He formed his own political party. He gave a speech entitled 'General Elections or Military Coup'. He tried to rally all the opposition forces. He opposed the introduction of voting machines. He led a no-vote campaign. They tried to jail him for marching and he threatened to make the Police Commissioner look foolish in court. He wasn't eating nice. But this was no vulgar firebrand or rabble-rouser. If you read the speeches and followed the action Mr Chancellor you would find it exhilarating.

But at his most political he could not help sounding like a statesman. He grounded his indignation by detailed reference to the preamble to our constitution which he held to be the masterplan for social, political and personal morality. To this we must add, Mr Chancellor, a unique phenomenon. We cannot go far in any conversation about this extraordinary citizen without being struck by the unusual combination of heat and cold, passion and reason, urgency and patience in his disposition. Just as soon as you think he is about to be carried away, reason or reflection pulls him back.

So even in the most heated of times, Mr Chancellor, this was an intellectual inflamed by injustice, corruption, slackness and a sense of a threatened future. In 'Rescue Our Children', an address to teachers on Corpus Christi Day, May 26, 1967 he declared that Trinidad and Tobago was becoming a society whose dominant characteristic was fear, "fear to express a conviction and fear to stand up for the things in which one believes. Our public morality is degenerating into resignation in the face of things which are demonstrably and manifestly wrong." He called for strong men and women ready to do battle for what they valued: "Will you teach the children to be brave while you choose the cowardly path? Will you teach them to be sincere while you yourself pursue a policy of insincerity? Will you exhort them to be honest while you yourself are willing to corrupt and be corrupted?"

Mr Chancellor, I request you by the authority of Senate and Council, to admit Arthur N.R. Robinson, politician, statesman, and intellectual to the degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa.