

**STATEMENT BY WINSTON DOOKERAN
POLITICAL LEADER, CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE
AT A PUBLIC MEETING IN ST JOSEPH
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Thank you very much my friends here in St Joseph, the first capital of Trinidad and Tobago.

I know that you feel it, I know that you sense it, I know that you know it – the time has come for a new Government in Trinidad and Tobago.

The nation is on edge, the people are now becoming wide awake, the young are beginning to have rising expectations about their life ahead of them. And now the Congress of the People will become your next Government.

And tonight, as I came here, I heard speaking to you the most powerful woman in politics in Trinidad and Tobago today, Gillian Lucky and I salute her.

I know you heard before from a man who has been the architect for making this country safe and secure again, Captain Gary Griffith, our candidate for St Ann's East.

And someone who has always inspired me by his sense of sincerity and commitment; a man who has come from a long history of a political family that has served this nation and all parties well, Jamal Mohammed.

And all Tunapuna is proud today to have the person of the caliber, a person who has defended workers' rights, the person who has put back on his boots to enter political life in this country, Clyde Weatherhead.

And then the cast was widened, everyone in Trinidad and Tobago knows that Anil Roberts is a decider in the political life of our country.

And on the other side, we have the other decider, we have with us Inshan Ishmael.

So you have had a platform and we are about to talk about serious business for a few moments. I know that the people of our country when it comes to real decisions, there is a collective intelligence that is not so apparent by the way we talk and behave.

We talk and behave sometimes with futility, sometimes with a sense of frivolity, sometimes with a lot of picong and jokes and sometimes people believe that our people are not serious.

But if you look at the political history of our country, you will see over the last 44 years that each time when the country is called upon in a moment of decision as to who shall hold office, there is a collective and a collective wisdom that supersedes everything. The country knows how to make the right decisions and they are about to do so again on November 5th.

We know that underneath all that is being said, we must protect our sovereignty as a people. As an independent people some 44 years ago, we searched for this journey which would give us the right to self determination and will give us the right to build a society and a nation and will give us the right to put a Government whose only purpose is to execute the solutions to our many problems in our society.

You have heard some here tonight, I have no doubt. Problems of crime and security, problems in the labour movement, problems with respect to our healthcare, problems with respect to education.

What is very clear today is that the world has move ahead, even in the Caribbean, our countries are pacing forward, but here in Trinidad and Tobago, we are caught up in a politics that has imprisoned us, de-energised us and have made us almost as if we feel we are powerless.

That is why the decision you have to make, and all of Trinidad and Tobago has to make, in the next two weeks is whether we shall demonstrate the wisdom as a people, the intelligence of a society and the power as individuals to free ourselves and make November 5th 2007 freedom day for Trinidad and Tobago.

My friends, freedom day is not only a rallying call. Behind it there are some serious issues about our sovereignty in our nation. On the one hand, we have Mr Manning who has had two opportunities to be Prime Minister, the last one for six years and with a tremendous amount of resources available to him.

But at the end of his term, what will be his legacy? Would it be that he has solved this country's problems? Or would it be that he himself has created a problem for this country?

Would it be that he has defended our democracy? Or would it be that he will now be a threat to that democracy?

Would it be that he would have protected our sovereignty as a small nation? Or would it be that he has now exposed our sovereignty to be undermined?

Those are the fundamental issues we will face on November 5th and the evidence that that is in fact so is clear for all to see.

You may have been following the debate regarding the constitution. On this

platform some time ago we revealed that there is a document that is called the draft constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago dated June 2007.

We asked the question who was the author of this document that is now so widely circulated? Who is responsible for the thinking behind this document? And will it in fact inform public positions beyond the election?

And we said we needed answers from those in charge of the State. We called on Mr Manning to declare his innocence or guilt about the authorship of this document, for we live in a democracy and the right of the people to know is a primary right that must always be upheld.

Don't ever give up that right to anyone because your sovereignty belongs to the people and it is the people who are the ultimate bosses.

So we asked that question but what reply did we get? He got one of his Ministers to claim that there is, as far as she is concerned, no such document. All she is aware of is the Sir Ellis Constitution report which was laid in Parliament. And another report prepared by the Principles of Fairness Committee.

As far as she was concerned, there was no other document.

And I waited, I waited to hear what the Prime Minister would say. And he came out and said 'have no fear, if we want to change the constitution, we will consult with the people first and we will make no provisions law until we get the consent of the people'.

But listen carefully, he never admitted whether this document was his thinking and whether it is the official policy of his party and himself.

Why is it frightening? In this document, there are provisions and I will only mention three here tonight.

The first is that he shall abolish the position of President and replace it with the position of Executive President so there will no longer be even ceremonial and residual checks on the Prime Minister. Now the Executive President shall now have all power.

Checks and balances to protect us from the abuse of power have never worked, as we have seen in the case of the Judiciary and in the CJ matter. So to talk about checks and balances is to hoodwink the people about false protection of their democracy.

In this constitution, there is also the implied assumption in the provisions for the abolition of the Privy Council as the last court of appeal and you know

within the last six years that our citizens had to go on numerous occasions to seek the support of the Privy Council to have their rights protected.

Also in this constitution I am told is a provision that there will be a limit in the judicial review process, so that the ordinary citizen will not have recourse to the courts if he feels that an injustice has been done to him in the same way.

So fundamentally, in this so called draft constitution, there are provisions to undermine your sovereignty as people of this country and is posing a danger to our democracy.

And today here in the first capital of Trinidad and Tobago, I want all the people to understand the seriousness of this. And in fact, in order countries that have not been as vigilant as they should have been, they have had to pay a high price.

The most glaring example which we all know about and many of us have experienced it with our colleagues is what happened in Guyana some years ago with Forbes Burnham when the party became paramount and the people become powerless.

So I want to ask all of Trinidad and Tobago and especially those who continue to feel an allegiance to the PNM, there is a time for party allegiance but there is a time for country and that is where we are today and this is what this election is about.

I ask all those who continue to have an allegiance to the party of which Mr Manning is political leader to go deep into their hearts and minds and ask themselves if this is the society and democracy they want to transfer to the next generation as will obviously happen.

Because not only is there a draft constitution, there is also a presidential palace in place for him to live.

So my friends, I say the collective wisdom of our people is now being called upon. I say now it is in fact the collective intelligence...I know our people in Trinidad and Tobago – they joke, they make joke, they always laughing but when it comes to real decisions, they stand up. And because I am so sure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago will stand up for their democracy, I know they will bring about this change in the next two weeks.

But then I looked on the other side and I looked at this pretenders to the throne because some of them believe this is a football game. Some of them believe that this politics is such that the people can be fooled and more than that, they believe that they can buy the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I say here today that Trinidad and Tobago is not for sale! And if this football man was successful in buying a party, he cannot buy Trinidad and Tobago.

Today, he has taken the political party he has bought and he has converted it into a promoter for entertainment in Trinidad and Tobago and that is the kind of people involved in that part of our politics.

I heard tonight there was a lot of discussion about who is and is not a jailbird because they claim to have many in their party now. That is the frivolity to which they want to reduce an important decision like electing a Government.

And the time has come for us to understand that this is the most important decision that we shall make not only for ourselves, but for the inheritors. And those who wish to undermine our sovereignty, either by constitution or by trying to buy the country must be told in no uncertain terms.

I call to all those who continue to have an allegiance to the UNC to think hard, to think deep, to think and understand that you parents and grandparents fought for political influence in this country and do not be fooled by those giving false promises. They don't have a chance to form the Government, but they are trying to fool the people with all kinds of 'pollstricks'.

I ask them to rise in defence of the sovereignty of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and that is my message to you here today.

All the people, 1.3 million people, in this little country can turn out to be a model for the rest of the world. We can show the world how to live and work in unity as a people who respect our own diversity, who will be able to appreciate our heritage and who will not compromise with our history and culture.

I could not imagine that Mr Manning would have the temerity to claim that his party is indeed a multiracial party. We know what we are fighting.

We are fighting for issues. We are fighting to protect the sovereignty of all the people in our land. We are fighting to defend our democratic rights as a people. We are fighting for solutions to our country's many problems.

We are not here to try and create fanfare and football fever. We are not here for that purpose. That is why I know here in the first capital of St Joseph, this is the best place for me to make a call for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago to come let us defend our sovereignty in Trinidad and Tobago.

And I call on the media to start raising the issues and this is the beginning – A framework for governance, changing direction in Trinidad and Tobago.

It tells you what will inform our thinking when you place us in Government. It is now a public document that was so since last Friday. And this Thursday, we will be revealing the second part of our contract with the people which will be the manifesto of the Congress of the People in which we will outline how we shall do what we have to do.

And then the following week, we shall reveal a third document which is the 100-day plan of action to tell you, after saying what we will do and how we shall do, we shall tell you when we shall do it.

I challenge any political parties to come forward and be so forthright with the people, to be so open with the people, to account to the people even in an election period. But they are accustomed to using secrecy to win Government. They are accustomed to using subterfuge to win elections. They are accustomed to denying information to win elections.

But we have come with the new politics – the people are the bosses of the politicians of Trinidad and Tobago.

And finally, it is now being said that we have no money. My friends, I want you to think carefully. It is true, we don't have the advertising power that Mr Manning has at his command.

Because he, without shame, is using public funds for the purposes of party advocacy. You know it...millions of dollars from the State.

In other words, the State is being used to promote a party in power which will then be used against the people and undermine the very sovereignty of the nation. So think about that.

And on the other side, you have those who have a bottomless pit which raises a very important national issue – could an international sporting agency have the right to come and interfere in the politics of Trinidad and Tobago by supplying millions of dollars to create an entertainment group?

Sovereignty belongs to the people, they must not allow themselves to be bought and sold even by an international sporting agency whose own track record is one of a dubious nature.

So what I am saying here today is that the serious issue is we are not for sale. We must protect our sovereignty and we must defend our democracy.

But when they say we don't have the money, I am not worried. Because we have opened 35 offices within one year throughout Trinidad and Tobago and we have not paid a cent for that.

The communities themselves opened the offices!

And today, the amount of voluntary assistance we are getting...I was at a meeting in Tunapuna with Clyde Weatherhead when he made an appeal for funds.

One member of the audience got up there and then and said 'I have a computer for you, come and take it'. That is replicated thousands of times in this country.

We are fighting the election with the sweat of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Your toil and your sweat and your hopes are the riches we have and nothing that they put can overcome us.

I thank you.