

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD
AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON JANUARY 13, 1992

SESSION 1992

VOLUME 38

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 13, 1992

10.00 A.M.

The House having assembled and it being the first meeting of the First Session of the Fourth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Clerk of the House read the following Proclamation:

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

No. 1 of 1992

[L.S.]

By His Excellency Noor Mohamed Hassanali,
President and Commander-in-Chief of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

NOOR M. HASSANALI
President

A PROCLAMATION

Whereas it is provided by subsection (1) of section 67 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago each Session of Parliament shall be held at such place within Trinidad and Tobago and shall commence at such time as the President may by proclamation appoint:

And Whereas it is expedient that a Session should be held:

Now, therefore, I, Noor Hassanali, President as aforesaid, do hereby appoint the Red House, Port-of-Spain, as the place at which the First Session of the Fourth Parliament shall be held at 10.00 a.m. on Monday the 13th day of January, 1992, as the time at which the said session shall commence.

Given under my hand and the Seal of
the President of the Republic of
Trinidad and Tobago, at the Office
of the President, St. Ann's, this
13th day of January, 1992.

Election of Speaker

Monday, January 13, 1992

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Clerk of the House: Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order No. 3, I now invite nominations for the election of the Speaker.

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Clerk, I beg to nominate Miss Occah Seapaul as Speaker.

Seconded by Mr. R. Maharaj.

There being no other nominations, the Clerk of the House of Representatives declared Miss. Occah Seapaul duly elected Speaker of the House of Representatives.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Miss Occah Seapaul, having been summoned to the Chamber, took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Madam Speaker: I do wish to express thanks to the hon. Members of this House for the trust and the confidence reposed in me by electing me Speaker of the House of Representatives. I will, at all times, try never to betray that trust and confidence. Once again, thank you, hon. Members.

ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I now invite nominations for the election of Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services (Dr. The Hon. Linda Baboolal): Madam Speaker, I beg to nominate Mr. Rupert Griffith as Deputy Speaker.

Seconded by Mr. M. Marshall.

There being no other nominations, Dr. Rupert Griffith was declared Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Dr. Rupert Griffith took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

Madam Speaker: I now invite all other Members to take their oath.

Oath of Allegiance

Monday, January 13, 1992

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.

Hon. Kenneth Valley, Diego Martin Central
Hon. Patrick Manning, San Fernando East
Hon. Keith Sobion, Ortoire/Mayaro
Hon. Wendell Mottley, St. Ann's East
Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh, St. Joseph
Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley, Diego Martin West
Hon. John Eckstein, Arouca South
Hon. Morris Marshall, Laventille West.
Dr. The Hon. Linda Baboolal, Barataria/San Juan
Hon. Ralph Maraj, San Fernando West
Hon. Kenneth Collis, Laventille East/Morvant
Hon. Colm Imbert, Diego Martin East
Dr. Vincent Lasse, Point Fortin
Hon. Jean Pierre, Port-of-Spain South
Mr. Andrew Casimire, Toco/Manzanilla
Mr. Jarette Narine, Arouca North
Mr. Edward Hart, Tunapuna
Mr. Desmond Allum, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West
Mr. Hedwige Bereaux, La Brea
Mr. Cyril Rajaram, Pointe-a-Pierre
Mr. Ramesh Maharaj, Couva South
Mr. Basdeo Panday, Couva North
Mr. John Humphrey, St. Augustine
Mr. Trevor Sudama, Oropouche

Oath of Allegiance

Monday, January 13, 1992

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh, Caroni Central

Miss Hulsie Bhaggan, Chaguanas

Mr. Shamshuddin Mohammed, Caroni East

Dr. Carl Singh, Tabaquite

Mr. Subhas Panday, Naparima

Mr. Krish Jurai, Nariva

Mr. Chandresh Sharma, Fyzabad

Mr. Mohammed Haniff, Princes Town

Mr. Sahid Hosein, Siparia

PRAYERS

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, His Excellency the President desires to address a joint session of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The sitting is suspended.

10.41 a.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

10.55 a.m. *Members of the Senate arrived and took their places in the Chamber.*

11.16 a.m. *His Excellency the President, accompanied by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, arrived in the Chamber.*

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

His Excellency Noor Mohamed Hassanali, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, addressed both Houses of Parliament as follows:

Mr. President of the Senate, Madam Speaker, hon. Members, I thank you for the opportunity to address you on the occasion of the Opening of the First Session of the Fourth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; and I could not be thanking you on a more beautiful day. We thank the good Lord for this beautiful morning.

I extended cordial greetings to you with my prayer that God's peace be with us all.

President's Address

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Hon. Members have each subscribed an oath or affirmation of allegiance and of office. That of the Hon. Prime Minister, other Ministers or of Parliamentary Secretaries reads—

. . . that I will bear true faith and allegiance to Trinidad and Tobago and will uphold the Constitution and the law, that I will conscientiously, impartially and to the best of my ability discharge my duties. . . "

as Prime Minister or Minister or Parliamentary Secretary, as the case might be.

". . . and do right to all manner of people without fear or favour, affection or ill-will."

That of every other Honourable Member whether elected or appointed, reads—

". . . that I will bear true faith and allegiance to Trinidad and Tobago, will uphold the Constitution and the law and will conscientiously and impartially discharge the responsibilities to the people of Trinidad and Tobago upon which I am about to enter."

I feel sure that hon. Members will do their best to remain mindful of and faithful to their respective oaths or affirmations of allegiance and of office. They are meaningful solemn promises.

I trust, too, that throughout every sitting, hon. Members will remain mindful of the prayer which initiates every sitting. In each case, in the Senate and in the House of Representatives, it is a meaningful and appropriate prayer in which hon. Members, among other things, acknowledge Almighty God as the source of all wisdom, and as protector and guide, and you beseech His protection and His guidance.

The promise to discharge one's responsibilities conscientiously, involves the role of the human conscience; that functional agent of the spirit—God's spirit in man, sometimes referred to as "the still small voice within", whose role is the supervision of the intellectual judgement. It is, I perceive, the responsibility of civilized man to cultivate and promote the enlightened conscience while exemplifying the basic human virtues rooted in self-respect and respect and due consideration for fellow human beings.

The people of Trinidad and Tobago have, since 1962, by the Constitution, affirmed their recognition of the supremacy of God our Creator, and of mankind as comprising members of one large human family. We are accordingly

President's Address
[MR. N. HASSANALI]

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committed to individual and public awareness of God's presence and supremacy, and to caring and sharing in our society. We are fortunate to have in Trinidad and Tobago an active Inter-Religious Organization. It can contribute to such individual and public awareness of God's presence and supremacy and to such virtues of caring and sharing. We can and we ought to help the Organization to make its contribution accordingly.

Let us re-affirm our faith in the importance of the family unit in civilized society—in the words of our Constitution—

". . . a society of free men and free institutions. . ."

We have also, since 1962, committed ourselves to respect for moral and spiritual values in addition to the rule of law. Implicitly, we then committed ourselves to truth, a commitment which is a *sine qua non* condition of integrity in public as well as in private life. These commitments are binding upon us all, of whatever station or occupation in life, both inside and outside of Parliament, and in every one of our activities.

Indeed, I respectfully suggest that the society that ignores moral and spiritual values does so at its own peril.

Accordingly, in these and related commitments, hon. Members, occupying as they do, the senior level in "the science and art of government", as the word "politics" is defined, constantly bear a measure of responsibility as exemplars for your colleagues at other levels in public life.

Hon. Members, whether you perceive yourselves as now vested with power or with privilege, you will, I trust, remain ever mindful of corresponding responsibility. For its stability, its welfare and progress, a society will wish to secure as a base, peace, goodwill and mutual trust, among its members.

Whether or not austerity measures are necessary for our well-being, we ought, as a caring and sharing people, to promote humility and the simple life, and avoid extravagance and waste. Let us also cultivate the virtues of self-help, of thrift and of conservation. Let us exercise patience, and recognize our responsibility to make necessary sacrifice. Let us distinguish our needs from mere desires. Let us distinguish selflessness from selfishness—consulting not only our own interest and ambition but considering the interest of others as well as our own. We must distinguish community from self, and national interests from sectoral interests.

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Hon. Members will, I trust, use available opportunities both in and out of Parliament to exemplify and otherwise promote those several virtues which, hopefully, I have identified, as well, of course, others of your own perception.

We need to build a national character which would ensure that we remain united in spirit and purpose and in resolve, not only to discharge present responsibilities, but also to meet challenges which we may face from time to time in the future.

The responsibilities: to the people of Trinidad and Tobago which hon. Members have undertaken involve a measure of sacrifice, varying in extent and intensity. It may be a sacrifice of time, or of income, or of family life. Responsibilities may prove difficult to discharge, exacting or exasperating. I urge with all my strength, that on such occasions you draw upon your resources of character—including your self-respect, your patience, your courage, your common-sense, and not least of all, your good sense of humour.

At all events, I plead, by your word and action, please remain steadfast in faith and allegiance to Trinidad and Tobago and in your faith in our system, the democratic process and institutions.

Hon. Members may at times be disappointed, even discouraged, but hopefully, never downcast as you reflect on those responsibilities and on such, true faith and allegiance.

I extend my best wishes for an enjoyable and successful session of Parliament. To this end, I trust that you will earn God's favour in your efforts. I pray that He will, in and out of Parliament, protect you from evil and error, and that He will guide you in your deliberations, in the decisions which you make, and the actions which you take from time to time in the discharge of your responsibilities to the people of our beloved country.

Mr. President of the Senate, Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, I extend from my family to you and to the members of your respective families our best wishes for peace and for your health and happiness in 1992, and thereafter.

May God bless us all, and may God bless our nation.

11.45 a.m: *Joint sitting adjourned.*

Paper Laid

Monday, January 13, 1992

11.58 a.m.: *Sitting of the House resumed.*

PAPER LAID

Address by His Excellency the President at the opening of the 1992 session of Parliament on Monday, January 13, 1992. [*The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]

To be printed and circulated as a House Paper.

CONGRATULATIONS

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, may I, on behalf of all Members of this honourable House and on behalf of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, congratulate you on your elevation to the high public office of Speaker of the House of Representatives of Trinidad and Tobago.

I cannot recall, Madam Speaker, any election to public office in our beloved country which has met with such public acclaim as yours. The reasons for such general acclamations are many and together, evidenced the inspiration behind your election today. There are those who say that this is one of the most historic openings of our Parliament. So many things are different. The number of new faces which adorn the benches, the promise of a most challenging session given the distribution of seats between the Government and the Opposition, official as well as unofficial.

You, Madam Speaker, are making history too, being the first of your sex to wear these robes which we had been accustomed seeing on the shoulders of men. This historic appointment must be seen as an achievement, not only for women, but for the nation as a whole. You, who have already created a name for yourself by your accomplishments in the judiciary, are an ideal role model for all young people, especially the fairer sex.

In fact, the switch to this new sphere is merely an endorsement of your outstanding record of achievement. Those of us who know you feel confident that you will bring with you the scholarship and wisdom that you displayed in your judicial office as a Master of the High Court of Trinidad and Tobago. We feel sure that the balance and fairness which you brought to bear on your deliberations there will accompany you now as you preside in this highest court of our land, our Parliament.

Congratulations

Monday, January 13, 1992

Madam Speaker, ever since you were announced as Speaker designate the media have spoken and written glowingly of your achievements in many ways that I could not better. Accordingly, it would be an anti-climax for me to repeat what they have said. However, I must mention the fact that we know you are a very spiritual person who always seeks divine guidance.

As this House embarks on its debates we hope that you would bring with you that guidance to direct our proceedings and that you will bring also that sincerity and inspiration which we know you possess.

As we embark on this, the fourth Parliamentary Session of our Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, all of us present are excited to be making history with you and pledge our support and co-operation. We say, yes, we are happy to be guided by Madam Speaker. I thank you.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva South*): Madam Speaker, on behalf of those Members of the House who sit on this side, I join with my other colleagues in extending to you our most sincere congratulations on your being elevated to the office of Speaker of this honourable House. It is said Madam, that history is being made by the appointment of a woman to this high office of Speaker. Madam, I humbly and respectfully submit that when the history of this Parliament comes to be writ, your name will be written with honour not because of your gender but because during your term you would have conducted the affairs of this House with honour and dignity, with impartiality and fairness, without bias and favouritism. I feel sure that history will so record.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Patrick Manning): Madam Speaker, it would have been very remiss of me if an occasion like this were allowed to pass without adding my own quota of congratulations to you on the acquisition of the exalted office of Speaker of Parliament of the lower House of Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Of course, Madam Speaker, you are creating history by sitting in that chair this morning and you are following pretty short tradition—a good tradition nonetheless—of persons who have sat in that chair and who have done justice to the people of Trinidad and Tobago in the way they have conducted their affairs. I assure you that you were elected as Speaker not because of your sex—I am very happy that we have a female Speaker—but you were elected as Speaker because we are convinced that you possess the ability to properly discharge the functions that devolve on the shoulders of the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Congratulations
[HON. P. MANNING]

Monday, January 13, 1992

It is the intention of those of us on this side of the House to so conduct our affairs that will make your job as easy as possible, but that we will also at the same time, maintain the dignity that is expected of this Parliament in the conduct of our public affairs.

Madam Speaker, I wish to assure Members of the Opposition that I understand very well what is involved in opposition. I have passed that way and indeed, with all sincerity Madam Speaker, I thank the people of Trinidad and Tobago for having given me an opportunity to serve them from the Opposition benches and therefore I give you the assurance that in the conduct of our affairs here we will take the legitimate requirements of the Leader of the Opposition and his team into account.

Madam Speaker, over the last month, the Prime Minister has been seeking to set the tone for his Government for the next five years and as you are well aware, that is the tone of co-operation and goodwill. It is the same spirit that we proposed to ensure prevails here in the Parliament. While the Prime Minister has been seeking to set the tone for the Government, the Members of the Government, the Members of the Cabinet in particular, have been settling down to work, and work has been advanced to the point where we believe we are ready to go, Madam Speaker. Accordingly, it is an appropriate time for me to announce that the annual budget will be read by the Minister of Finance here on Friday, January 17, at 4.00 p.m. The Parliament will convene for that purpose.

We have chosen that day so that enough time will be given to the Opposition to study that budget presentation and to be able to respond appropriately to it. The requirements of the Opposition are being taken into account. The budget documents will be circulated before they are officially laid in Parliament when it meets on Friday.

Madam Speaker, permit me once again to congratulate you. I wish you well. I have every reason to believe that you will do well Madam Speaker, if I am to be guided by your antecedents. You have done well before, I am sure you will do well again. I confidently believe that this session of Parliament will go down as, perhaps, one of the most interesting and perhaps the best that the country would have experienced in our short independent history. Thank you Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I am very heartened by the expressions of the sentiments uttered here this morning, and I too look forward to working with you.

Congratulations

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May I say that I feel that all of us here have been privileged to belong to this honourable House. At this period of our lives this is where we are going to serve the nation of Trinidad and Tobago and I have no doubt that both Members of Government as well as Members of the Opposition are all aware of the noble roles that you all will play in nation building; and in the development of this nation.

I feel very confident that as you discharge those duties concomitant with those roles, you are going to conduct your business in a manner that will really earn all of us the admiration and the respect of our people. I can say here today that many Members of the Opposition in their congratulations to me have pledged to maintain the dignity of this House and I thank them for it. Many Members of Government have called to express their congratulations on my appointment and they too have promised that they are going to maintain the dignity of the Parliament.

As I said before, each one understands his or her role and I am not really going to be uttering the nature of those roles. I simply ask again, that in the conduct, and the discharge of those roles that we are ever mindful of our oath, and ever mindful that we are exemplars of this society. The people of the nation have put us here; they will be looking to us for guidance and we must take that vow silently in our hearts that we are going to be the exemplars to this nation.

Thank you again hon. Members. I look forward to healthy, as well as heated debates during this ensuing parliamentary session. Thank you very much. God bless all of you.

Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, January 17, 1992 at 4.00 p.m. [Hon. K. Valley]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 12.12 p.m.