

*Proclamation**Wednesday, July 11, 2012*

**THE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
OFFICIAL REPORT  
IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON JUNE 18,  
2010**

**SESSION 2012-2013****VOLUME 1****SENATE***Wednesday, July 11, 2012***1.30 P.M.**

The Senate having assembled, and it being the first meeting of the Third Session of the Tenth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Clerk of the Senate read the following Proclamation

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

No. 6 of 2012.

[L.S.]

By His Excellency Professor GEORGE MAXWELL  
RICHARDS, T.C., C.M.T., Ph.D., President and  
Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of  
Trinidad and Tobago.

GEORGE M. RICHARDS  
President

**A PROCLAMATION**

WHEREAS it is provided by subsection (1) of section 67 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that 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:

Now, therefore, I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS, President as aforesaid, do hereby appoint Tower D, Port-of-Spain International Waterfront Centre, 1A, Wrightson Road, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, as the place at which the Third Session of the Tenth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago shall be held and 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2012, 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 22nd day of June, 2012.

Prayers

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**PRAYERS**

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. Basharat Ali and Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin who are both ill.

Hon. Senators, His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, desires to address all Members of Parliament assembled together. This sitting is now suspended.

**1.34 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS**

*President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, other Members of Parliament, specially invited guests, representatives of the media, other distinguished ladies and gentlemen: I have the privilege of addressing Members of Parliament, once again, at a Ceremonial Opening, today marking the beginning of the Third Session of the Tenth Parliament of our Republic. Let me give you the assurance that there is no need to brace yourselves, on the assumption that I will be tempted to be long-winded, this being, according to plan, the last time that such a privilege will be afforded me. I am told that in a multitude of words there is sin and I would not wish to be found guilty of desecrating this House, particularly in view of my role, as established in the Constitution, as Head of the Parliament, a fact that many citizens of our country do not know. The relevant information stated in Chapter 4, which deals with the Parliament, Part 1, section 39, is as follows:*

*“There shall be a Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago which shall consist of the President, the Senate and the House of Representatives.”*

*As is, perhaps well known, I came from a background of academia, not the ivory tower that some people carelessly assume it to be, to serve as President of Trinidad and Tobago, “elected in accordance with the provisions of this Chapter—that is to say Chapter 4 of the Constitution—“who shall be...Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.” From March 17, 2003, when I first took the oath of office, I have come to understand, somewhat better, what that means, certain interpretations being subjected to some legitimate adjustment.*

*On occasion, during my still active sojourn in the Presidency, I have observed, with deep interest and have come to recognize, other persons' understanding of what it means to be President of the Republic of Trinidad and*

*Tobago. My conclusion is that there remains a large space for education on this matter, at all levels of our own society, in the outside world and on the part of visitors as well.*

*Some may say that I have the right to orate as I please, given the context, but I have come to realize that we have become very conscious of our rights, sometimes to the exclusion of all else. While not making light of entitlement and inalienable rights, particularly human rights and equal rights, we may want to consider them in the context of the collective, so that we may accelerate our advancement as a nation. And as I mention equal rights, I muse about equal opportunity and ask myself whether we, every single one of us, should not be more concerned than some of us seem to be about equal opportunity. If that is achieved, in respect of all of us, then, what we do with our opportunity will be up to us and no one else can take responsibility for our success or failure.*

*Moreover, we need to remind ourselves that equal opportunity is not the domain of any individual or group in our diverse population. Decisions taken in this Parliament must be such as to ensure even-handedness and transparency in policies that affect the welfare of all our citizens. There must be equality of opportunity and merit must count above every other consideration.*

*With this in mind, perhaps we need to be more conscious of the provisions of our Constitution. We should take the trouble to inform ourselves of what is, in fact, a contract between the people of this nation and our leaders. It is a contract that goes beyond the temporary high points of election drama that takes place from time to time. It is a contract that positions our people to require of our parliamentary and local government representatives, elected as well as appointed, that the decisions taken in our Parliament, our local government bodies, the Tobago House of Assembly and the execution of those decisions by state entities reflect the fulfilment of the promises that they make when they choose to offer themselves for public service.*

*The preamble of our Constitution remains valid and relevant to the aspirations of a country such as ours, whose people are known to have made outstanding contributions to the development of other countries. Some of them have much longer recorded histories than ours and are described as developed, a status that we are striving to achieve.*

*Waves of brain drain to these countries, which persist today, tell a story of many facets, which we ought not to ignore. We must guard against being parochial, but we must ask ourselves why our nationals would find fulfilment*

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*elsewhere. Is it by choice or because they have no other choice? All must be included in the process of nation building and we must recognize that expertise resides in Trinidad and Tobago which can be given preference over foreign input. In the context of a less than healthy Treasury, this must be a consideration.*

*Every paragraph of the preamble contributes to expectations which, if assiduously pursued, can create the conditions necessary for the commonweal, enabling the people of this country, at whatever level, to experience a sense of ownership of this space and of belonging. It is normal to preserve what you own. What decisions are being taken in the Parliament, the highest law-making body in our land, to make Trinidad and Tobago more wholesome and attractive to its people?*

*What systems are in place to develop a people more educated concerning the functioning of this country and ways and means to make it better? This is not a flash in the pan exercise, but one that calls for measured decision-making with an eye on the future. But in looking ahead, we must be careful in our quest for new things, not to discard the past and behave as if it did not exist. We will find that some decisions of the past were taken on solid foundations.*

*In this regard, I think of education. Some may say that there was a time when we were better educated, even though there was a certain measure of exclusivity. It may be well to examine this area and adjust appropriately, by the policy decisions that we take, so that we may not become altogether a more certified, rather than an educated people.*

*Be that as it may, recognition must be given to what successive administrations have done, over several years, to make education more accessible and we can congratulate ourselves that we are one of the very few countries in the world where education is free, from nursery to tertiary levels.*

*Many things have to be done to make our systems more efficient and workable at all levels, and the education budget must reflect an understanding of this. If we get the education right, a number of positives will follow in other aspects of national development. But in our fixing of systems, we need to pay serious and honest attention to the quality of university education that we offer.*

*Recently, the discovery a new particle with properties consistent with the Higgs Boson and which has been described as the God Particle has been reported, and I am quite certain that this presents another opportunity for scientific innovation which we should seize. Except for the steel pan, we have been consumers rather than innovators and we must be careful not to miss out on getting in at the ground level of this new scientific exposure and here, university education matters.*

*We need to become more conscious of the fact that very serious work has been done and continues to be done at our regional institutions, the University of the West Indies, including its St. Augustine campus. To its credit, links have been forged, over the years, with some of the highest ranking institutions of higher learning internationally.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, there was a certain vision birthed when the University of Trinidad and Tobago was established, particularly in respect of science and technology, which is critical and UTT must do no less than the University of the West Indies. None of us, I am sure, would like to see our national university lose its relevance to the communities that it is intended to serve, as there is a preeminent place for universities in the scheme of national development. But this can only be preserved if we are ever mindful of the purpose of university education.*

*Our universities must also ensure that not every social value is measured in terms of technological achievement and, as I have said before, the traditional role of universities in examining philosophical and ethical questions in critical analysis of the social order and in fostering artistic expression, must be re-endorsed as they take on enhanced roles in orienting and training students for knowledge-based development. Critical analyses, to which I have referred, must be strengthened, especially in an atmosphere in which these achievements could easily be devalued.*

*To achieve success, the independence of the university must be untrammelled and independent thinking be allowed to flourish. In no way should the Treasury influence the direction of the university in a young nation such as ours. The intellectual and creative energy that the university must provide, in order to enhance the country's economic performance, cannot be compromised.*

*The university is not a place that can accommodate anything, but the best professional behaviour in all its practices. Academic excellence can only be achieved in a climate of understanding clearly what the university is for and the seminal role that it must play in the sustainable development of any nation.*

*There is, consequently, no room for partisan behaviour and personal preference in appointments at the highest levels of leadership at our university or at the level of academic staff. Ability is what matters and governments and others concerned must ensure that academic autonomy is preserved.*

*In the matter of compromise, I cast my mind to law and order which, over the past several years, have come under siege, in this country, to an unprecedented level. In addressing this, the highest law-making body in the land, I feel compelled to*

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*join with those who rue the obvious lawlessness that confronts us. This state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue, but, in working towards solutions, we must, on all sides, be reminded that zeal must not inform our behaviour, lest mixed signals be conveyed, if in any way, due process appears to be eschewed. Reproach must not be allowed to impede good intention. There is no question but that joint police/army patrols have been playing a critical role in the fight against crime and in the maintenance of law and order in our country. However, in their modus operandi, there must be a clear demonstration of understanding of the chain of command, within both entities, with wisdom dictating the levels of involvement. In this context, the philosophy of speaking truth to power must apply.*

*On another matter, reproach must not find a place in the working of Parliament and, in this context, I am all for the independence of Parliament. I think that the time has come for such independence to be established, in every aspect, so that the work of Parliament may be enhanced and be seen to be free of bias. And there is another area within our systems where independence must be preserved. I refer to the independent commissions established under the Constitution. I believe that everything possible should be done to ensure better working conditions for these commissions, which were established for good reasons, reasons which have not lost their validity. As I have mentioned before in this honourable House, consigning them to history is not a good option. They are guardians of our democracy.*

*Before closing, may I say that we should be deeply appreciative of those who serve in the Parliament of our nation. You do not have an easy task and I believe that this fact could not have been fully understood until you began to function as a parliamentarian. Your profession requires solid preparation. And I dare say that, contrary to Plato's bitter conclusion, I believe that there is a place in politics for men of conscience. Mercy is not easily dispensed here and perhaps it should not be sought, in this arena, which is more conducive to the stance of gladiators. But in all that you do, please be reminded that at the centre of your consciousness should be the reality that people are the reason why you are here, not opportunity.*

*I am thinking of the entire constituency of Trinidad and Tobago, of whatever creed, race or social condition, the retiree of whatever rank, including the Judiciary, who is no longer visible and perhaps living in penury or not far from it, having given outstanding service; the working poor who does not stand out as the indigent does; those relatively small organizations that may not have the clout of*

*established non-governmental organizations but which need your help, in order to help others. And let us not forget those who create and provide jobs—companies, cooperatives and individuals—who must make their contributions to the Treasury, but must be recognized for what they do.*

*As I have made reference to the work being done in the Parliament of which, constitutionally, I am a part, I think of the process of election of a President of Trinidad and Tobago which is clearly set out in the Constitution. We have heard it said, repeatedly, that the President is above politics and quite separate in his sphere of operation from the Government and the Judiciary. No one can be sure how a President votes in national elections if he/she chooses to exercise this right. Yet, there are those who conveniently aver that the President is a creature of the Government in power. At this stage of our development, there can be no good excuse for continuing in this vein and, at age 50, I am sure that we can do much better than that.*

*I therefore take this opportunity to thank the various administrations that have served, during my tenure, for the ways in which we were able to work together in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I am sure that we were all afforded several opportunities for growth. I thank also the officers and staff of the Parliament, at all levels, for their dedication to duty and their cooperation with the Office of the President. I wish you all very well.*

*Finally, how do we rate ourselves in this golden anniversary? We have done some things right, as evidenced by the fact, inter alia, that we remain, politically a sovereign state. We have far to go and we cannot say that the road ahead signposts any guarantees. Indeed, if the truth be told, there are many questions, which some may choose to circumvent, but there is no wisdom in that. We have preserved our democracy, but I cite a response reportedly given by a United States President to a citizen who asked what he was giving to the people, state benevolence being at the heart of the question. He said: "A Republic, if you will preserve it." I believe that we, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, should ponder this, as we move on from this significant landmark of 50 years. Will we preserve our Republic?*

*In seeking to answer that question, we may wish to consider, deeply and honestly, the first base of our Republican Constitution which recalls inter alia that: "...the People of Trinidad and Tobago—"*

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*(a) have affirmed that the Nation of Trinidad and Tobago is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, faith in fundamental human rights and freedoms, the position of the family in a society of free men and free institutions,...the dignity of the human person and the equal and inalienable rights with which all members of the human family are endowed by their Creator;”*

*In the decisions that are taken in this Parliament, have we been ever mindful to uphold these principles and the others that are stated in the preamble? Are we as conscious of the dignity of the human person as we might be? Is there any room for the perception that modern-day slavery can flourish here and, on the other hand, are we insisting on productivity as a necessary element in the preservation of human dignity? Are we mindful of the need to turn around our lack of competitiveness in the global environment and conscious as to where that work must begin? We must take the hard look if we are to equip ourselves properly to manage the next half century of independence status.*

*I look forward to accelerated social revolution in our country and the eradication of social insecurity, as a direct result of the collaboration in this Parliament of all who serve. I wish you all a most productive session and thank you for your service to our Republic. At a personal level, I convey to you, your families and you loved ones best wishes for good success in your positive endeavours.*

*Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the courtesy of your kind attention, and may God bless our nation. [Applause]*

*Senators return to the Senate Chamber.*

**3.18 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

#### **PAPER LAID**

Address by His Excellency the President on the occasion of the opening of the Third Session of the Tenth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh)*]

*To be printed as a Senate Paper.*



*Adjournment*

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#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh):** Mr. President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

**Mr. President:** Before putting the question, I would like to invite one representative from each Bench to make some remarks on the occasion of the anniversary of our independence.

#### **Fiftieth Independence Anniversary Greetings**

**The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh):** Mr. President, at one minute past midnight on August 31, 1962, the Trinidad and Tobago flag was raised for the first time, our National Anthem was sung and prayers offered from our major religious denominations. The bells tolled, sirens screamed and horns blared heralding our birth as a newly independent nation, but the celebration of this historical and pivotal moment was just the beginning, it was not the consummation. Independence after all is not something to be bestowed, it is something to be earned. But independence brought with it the opportunity to build the framework for the nation we desired and deserved. We now had responsibility for our national progress.

Iconic political geniuses like Dr. Eric Williams, Dr. Rudranath Capildeo advised by legal luminaries like Tajmool Hosein, worked together to forge a strong constitutional democracy within which our citizens could grow and build a nation. Indeed, as we look back over the past five decades, our landscape boldly reflects the grandeur of our successes in every sphere of endeavour, all of which were achieved through the adherence to our watchwords, Discipline, Production and Tolerance.

Our nation has spawned and nurtured greatness in politics, academia, literature, sports, arts and culture, distinguishing us in the eyes of the world. Our citizens have consistently excelled over many years and continue to do so. All our varied and numerous past achievements have a place in our present and must anchor our ambitions for the future. They remain a vivid and constant reminder of our national character, our strength and our abilities, they demonstrate to the world the things we value as a people and give us the courage to face the challenges of our time with confidence.

Over the past 50 years our people have chosen to live in harmony, enjoying each other's diversity in a manner that has made us a model multicultural nation. We in the Government and in this Parliament have an obligation to ensure that the gains over the past five decades do not perish in our hands. Indeed, this Parliament is

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more than a symbol of our democracy, it has been a significant institution in fashioning and strengthening our democratic society. It has implemented many important laws to protect the rights and freedoms of our citizens, and in recent years, by opening up our deliberations to the public, we have made major strides in engaging members of our civil society in the process of the governance of our nation.

Today, our democracy remains strong. In 1946 the first universal adult suffrage election was held in our country. It was, of course, a limited form of democracy with half of the seats being nominated by the Governor, nevertheless, it was a first step. Since then, we have exhibited tremendous discipline and resilience in the holding of non-violent, free and fair elections, a fact of which we can be justifiably proud.

As we face the future, we must continue to uphold the ideals upon which this country was built: respect, tolerance, discipline, hard work, inclusion, spirituality and ethics, ideals which must be reflected in our words and actions in this honourable place as we conduct the people's business. As a small, relatively young nation, I like to think of 50 as being young in the context of a nation, mature in the context of your life. In a world of 200 countries we, nevertheless, have the maturity and awareness to appreciate that our most important resource is our people.

This Government shall, therefore, remain service oriented. We will remain close to our citizens and responsive to their aspirations and needs. We remain committed to enhancing the quality of our democracy by focusing on access to quality and relevant education, proper health care, safe communities and insistence on the adherence to the rule of law. As we seek to optimize the use of our physical resources for the benefit of our people, we do so in a sustainable manner, taking care of our needs today, while keeping our eyes on the needs of the future generation.

The OECD, not too long ago, removed us from the list of developing countries. We were also recently named as the third best place in the Commonwealth to raise a female child. This speaks volumes about our political will and value for equity and equality. Indeed, that we have a female Prime Minister is testament to the maturity and depth of our democracy.

Mr. President, hon. Senators, as we commemorate the opening of this parliamentary session in the year that we celebrate 50 years as an independent nation, let us remember and practise the ideals that have distinguished us on the

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world stage, and let us recommit ourselves to our country. It seems appropriate that I end with the chorus of G. Carlton Sampson's patriotic song, *Our Nation's Dawning*:

“O land of fairest beauty  
 We pledge our lives to duty  
 And vow this day,  
 And vow this day  
 And vow this day to serve thee”

Mr. President, I thank you and may God bless our nation. [*Applause*]

**Sen. Pannelope Beckles:** [*Applause*] Thank you very much, Mr. President. I know sometimes it is felt that women do not like to say their age, but I guess that—you know as we are celebrating 50 years, I stand here as a very proud 50-year-old. [*Applause*]

On the occasion of the anniversary of our 50<sup>th</sup> year following our independence, and as we celebrate independence, we are guided by the wise words of our President, expressed today, July 11, 2012. We reflect on the contributors of whose works 50 years later we stand and foremost among them is Dr. Eric Eustace Williams.

Mr. President, with your leave, I propose to read two paragraphs from *Forged From the Love of Liberty*, Dr. Eric Williams' address to a youth rally on the occasion of independence. I do so because these words are still relevant as we move on to the next 50 years. These words have been a lightpost to those who heard them and were exposed to them for the past 50 years, and will continue to be exposed to many for the next 50 years. Mr. President, as I said with your leave. This is page 329:

“I give to you, the young people, one additional principle on which to base your lives for the salvation of our Nation. This principle is honesty. In your future career you will at some time or the other have responsibility for money that is not yours, whether your employer is the Government of the country or a private firm. Every country makes special provision for the control of public expenditure and for the protection of the property of its citizens. In the final analysis, however, the control is exercised not by the Government or by the police but by the citizens themselves. Make honesty the guiding principle of your lives from this day forward. Let your ambition be the development of a

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Nation which, whatever its limitations, is distinguished in the eyes of the world by the honesty and integrity of its citizens. And so I say to you young people: forward to Independence: Do not allow anyone to disrespect our National Flag. Do not allow anyone to destroy one single National Bird. Do not allow anyone to desecrate our National Anthem. They are your Flag, your Birds, your Anthem. It is your Nation, even more than it is the Nation of your parents. You are the future; we are at best the present, at worst the past.

To your tender and loving hands the future of the Nation is entrusted. In your innocent hearts the pride of the Nation is enshrined. On your scholastic development the salvation of the Nation is dependent. At the birth of our Nation, four of its leading personalities, four of the people with the heaviest responsibility for its guidance, in the Cabinet, Parliament and the Judiciary, are scholarship winners, educated abroad at the expense of your parents, the taxpayers: the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice, the Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the House of Representatives and Leader of the Opposition. When you return to your classes after independence, remember therefore, each and every one of you, that you carry the future of Trinidad and Tobago in your school bags. Good luck to you all, to your parents and teachers, and to Trinidad and Tobago.”

There is nothing more, Mr. President, I can usefully add having read those two paragraphs. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan:** Thank you, Mr. President. Indeed for us it is a wonderful and momentous occasion as we are here on the verge of celebrating 50 years of independence. The Leader of Government Business has covered quite a territory in terms of what he has spoken, and my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition Bench, has also done that.

I want to think as we look back over the past 50 years, I must say that I am a little older than the Leader of the Opposition, and I recall 50 years ago on our first celebration of independence, I was a young man, a young boy, a young child and I celebrated independence with a snow cone that my uncle would have bought for me.

I did not understand at that time what we were talking about independence, what it meant and what it could mean and so. What I did understand is that I was going to a primary school in which 80 per cent of the children or more went to school barefooted; and 80 per cent of the children or more would have had to receive as part of their nutritional requirements skimmed milk from the United

Nations. I recall as well coming from a rural dairy community, that most of that milk was poured down the drain, and you would see every single day the drains ran white with milk, but they did keep the biscuits, because we got biscuits.

As I reflect 50 years on, that is not the case in our schools. In our schools there is a meal or two meals, for all of our children. In our schools, I cannot think of any child who would go barefooted to school, because it was then a question of affordability, now it might be a question of style.

I can think that when we were growing up, the opportunity for us to go to secondary school was extremely limited. I can think of my school where 70 children wrote common entrance and two passed for a secondary school, and now today, every single child can go to school. Every single child has the opportunity to go to secondary school.

I can think of university and those who had the opportunity to go to university, and now every single child who is qualified, every single young person can go to university free of charge.

And if it is one thing that I am most grateful to our forebearers, and those who went before us, in terms of our leaders, I am most grateful that they all carried the baton that education was the key to our progress as a nation. [*Applause*] When I look across the floor here to all our Senators, I think most of them could tell the story that without that door opening to education, they would not be here today in the elevated positions that they now hold, not only in the Senate but in terms of the careers they have been able to build and in terms of the businesses they have been able to build.

I can say we are a nation of achievement, great achievement. When I think back, and I have often had to say this, we, a country of 1.3 million people, can produce such beauty that we have two Miss Universes and one Miss World. So, per capita as the statisticians would say—my friend the Minister of Planning would say—per capita we must have the most beautiful women in the world.

I can think of culture where we have invented the only musical instrument in the past century, the steel band. I can think of sports and say with pride that we are the smallest country by population to ever win the gold medal for the 100-metres race, and I can think of many other things. I can think in terms of the economy, that such a small nation is the largest exporter of methanol in the world; such a small nation is the largest exporter or among the largest exporter of ammonia in the world.

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So, much has been done when we think back to independence where our GDP per capita was \$762 and now it is in the \$15,000 range. We have much to be proud of, but I can say the thing our citizens must feel most proud of is, while there is mayhem, disorder and discord in nations where there is not such a wide cross section of ethnicity, we can proudly boast that we live in harmony as a small nation and that we can give an example to the world as to what it is to live in harmony with all of this diversity.

As we celebrate on the verge of our 50<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary, I can think of the watchwords given to us by one of our most prominent sons of this Trinidad and Tobago: Discipline, Tolerance and Production. While we have excelled in many ways in terms of tolerance as we go forward, there is need for us to enhance our collective discipline, and even more so when we think of productivity, there is even greater need for us to be more productive as a nation, so that we can compete in a different and changing world, where there is so much we need to do to stay ahead of the curve.

On behalf of the Independent Bench, on behalf of my family and on behalf of the entire Senate, I express and extend greetings to the national community for success as we move forward, and for a wonderful and momentous celebration of our 50<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary.

I thank you, Mr. President. [*Applause*]

**Mr. President:** Thank you, hon. Senators. I too would like to join with you in congratulating the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the nation on the celebration of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence. Perhaps it is not just a day of celebration, because 50 years of independence really is our jubilee year, so we begin the celebrations on August 31. But for the entire year going forward, our jubilee year, I would suggest that it is a time for reflection, a reflection for yes, where we have succeeded, and we have done so marvellously in many ways, but where we have fallen short. A time, therefore, to revision, if you like, where we as a society are going, and what values we would like to inculcate as we straddle the next 50 years. In fact, the bearers of our culture, if you like, the artistes, it is a great time, in fact, for them to consider how we can endorse over the next 50 years the values, the patriotism that we experience as a people, so that it can hold us together and move forward as we develop over the next 50 years.

So, I join with you in asking Almighty God to bless our nation as we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence. [*Applause*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Senate adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 3.41 p.m.*