

**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
TRINIDAD
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

Message to the Nation from His Excellency Professor George Maxwell Richards TC, CMT, Ph. D, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on the occasion of Independence Day, 2010

Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago

Since our last celebration of National Independence, we have had opportunity to see democracy at work, here in Trinidad and Tobago, significantly, in two elections held during this year - General Elections in May and Local Government Elections in July - both of which were keenly contested. Most assuredly, the reminder to the country, coming out of these elections, turns on the power that resides in the will of the people, when they chose to exercise their right.

So, the baton has been passed on and there is another dispensation. I posit that the task ahead is to so manage the affairs of our country that there is clear evidence of equitable benefit to the entire nation, with its several publics. Expectations remain high, in that regard and whatever the challenges, gaps between those expectations and reality need to be dealt with in such a way that public trust is preserved and not dissipated. The truth is: the human condition demands and will accept no less.

Today we are forty-eight years old, as an Independent Nation and, once again, we must take stock. We are not far away from the fifty-year mark and we might do well to consider what we have achieved. There is no doubt that many of us have acquitted ourselves with distinction, in several areas, at home and abroad. Some of our achievements have gained prominent and sustained recognition and of this we can all be justly proud.

But I am certain that there are many unsung heroes who have not and may never come to public notice. I urge you to join me in celebrating these persons, salt of the earth, faceless to the vast majority of us, but known to those whom they have rescued, in one way or another and set on their feet.

These are the ones, true patriots, who have not given up on their communities and our country, in the face of the most trying circumstances.

It may well be that in their consciousness resides knowledge of the paths that we have taken on our journey from 1834, a journey which took another pace and direction in 1956, brought us to Independent Statehood in 1962 and to Republican status, within the

Commonwealth, in 1976. Far too many of us are not conscious of the way that we have come, the sacrifices that were made, the give and take, such as was exhibited, in the Independence talks at Marlborough House in London, when opposing political parties so managed their differences that our Nation was born, in 1962. That was only the beginning. We had to equip ourselves very quickly to take charge of our development as a people, facing and dealing with crises as they arose, over the years.

We saw value in and took pattern from many of the institutions which we were left, adapting as necessary, from time to time. Many of them have stood the test of time and as we proceed on the path of development, we must be ever mindful of the importance of upholding sound institutions which are at the centre of our existence. If the centre does not hold we cannot survive. In this context, we must judge whether we are satisfied with where we are at this point in our development. The yardstick may well be subjective, but I leave it to you to consider what we have gained and what life-ways we have let go, with questionable replacements in their stead.

We must embrace the twenty-first century, but in so doing, let us not be supine and accept whatever the rest of the world hands us. Many of us are capable of setting the pace in several areas of endeavour and we ought to see to it that our people, at every age, are so trained as to recognize their abilities to maximize the many resources of our own environment, for our own benefit and as a contribution to others. Our education system, broadly speaking, and making use of our elders, must so equip us.

Each one of us, regardless of social condition, has a responsibility to be the best that we can be, with help, from time to time, as may be necessary, even as we collaborate to break the dependency syndrome, wherever it may exist in the national psyche. Leadership, as I have indicated, has a duty in this regard.

I leave you with the reminder that we are a resilient people and can succeed at whatsoever we put our minds to. Let us, therefore, determine to build a solid Trinidad and Tobago.

Happy Independence Anniversary and may God bless our Nation.

George Maxwell Richards