

**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 2011**

Fellow Citizens

Today we are celebrating our 49th Anniversary as an independent State and my family joins me in sending congratulations to all and very best wishes for a better and better life - for you and for all those whom you hold dear.

We are doing many things right and we must continue to build on those achievements, in the various arms of governance, the private sector and in our individual capacities. But, we have cause for reflection, as this celebratory occasion is situated in a period of crisis.

None of us can deny that we are in troubling times, as is the rest of the world and, as the world is certainly looking at us, we as individuals and collectively, must take a deep introspective look at ourselves.

We did not come to this place suddenly, so shock would hardly be appropriate, in the circumstances. Blame and posturing cannot help us either and so we must, if we say that we love our country above self and mean it, do what is necessary to bring us back from the edge, to which we are dangerously close. "What is necessary" remains a question that may be answered, only partially, by some of the action that may be regarded as inevitable.

We cannot succeed if we do not ask ourselves how we came to this place of tension. Everyone has an opinion, I am sure, but none of us can afford to be insensitive to the issues that pervade our society. We have been spared some of

the tragedies that beset other nations, some of them post-colonial like ours, but we cannot trust to luck.

From now and in the future, it cannot be business as usual for any of us and there must be a clear demonstration, well understood by all, that we are all participants in the process of building our Nation and that the majority of us are not just consumers. At all levels of our society, good ideas abound and while leadership must lead, as we are required to do by reason of our office, solutions to critical matters may reside with the seemingly most insignificant among us, whose rights must be secure and whose responsibilities must not be diminished.

This may be a good time to reflect on the supreme law of our land, our Constitution, in the preamble of which it is declared that, among other things, the People of Trinidad and Tobago assert “their belief in a democratic society in which all persons may, to the extent of their capacity, play some part in the institutions of national life and thus develop and maintain due respect for lawfully constituted authority;”... “respect the principles of social justice and therefore believe that the operation of the economic system should result in the material resources of the community being so distributed as to subserve the common good...”

We must not lose hope, but have faith in a common citizenship where Trinidad and Tobago is paramount, even as we recognize our several ancestral origins from many different parts of the world. We owe it to ourselves and to the generations to come, to renew, in absolute consciousness, our pledge of allegiance to our beloved Trinidad and Tobago.

May God bless our Nation.

George Maxwell Richards.