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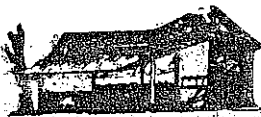


Ivan Laughlin

addresses the Senate
on Constitution Reform.

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The Background

MR. VICE PRESIDENT, Senators, citizens. Like Senator Julien, I consider this to be a historic occasion, but I also consider it to be one of a series of historic occasions in the entire discourse and deliberations surrounding the issue of constitution reform. I certainly have no doubt as to the sincerity and dedication of those men who have produced these documents which the Leader of Government Business here in the Senate has asked us to take note of.

I have taken note of these documents and I note that the opening sentence of the introduction to the Wooding Report on page 5 begins, and I would like to quote:

"As this Report is being written, the survival of constitutional, parliamentary politics is being challenged as never before in Trinidad and Tobago."

I note that the same introduction on page 6, paragraph 25 of the report, the commission stated and I quote again:

"Although the present constitution was discussed at Queen's Hall for three days, there was never any examination of the basic issue as to whether or not it was suited to our needs. Some of the delegates did perceive that it could be operated so as to be quite authoritarian. Their criticisms were brushed aside."

I further note that Mr. Reginald Dumas in his reservations to the Report in the footnote on page 133, points out that:

"Strictly speaking, we are not yet a nation; we are only a State. And in a state."

And in a state, let me repeat, Mr. Dumas is, of course, in that statement echoing the vibrations of a country torn by conflict and despair. Industrial unrest is a fact of life in Trinidad and Tobago. It is a norm. The ISA before, the IRA now, has no meaning. In 1973 and 1974 industrial turmoil has been raging mainly in the State owned corporations, in TELCO, T&TEC, WASA, Sugar. And that tells a story, because the PNM state ownership has brought no participation to the workers. It has simply extended Government patronage and political control.

Unemployment, by official figures, stands at 14%. Of those employed, 20% work less than 31 hours a week. And of that 20%, 37% work less than 16 hours per week. The most important fact about unemployment — a fact that possible more than anything else exposes the gravity of the crisis facing our country — is that in the age group 15 to 25 years, over 35% are unemployed: 35 out of every hundred walking the streets without jobs.

The lifeblood, the bloom of nationhood literally dying on the blocks of despair. And add to that the 1970 census figures produced by the Ministry

of Education for the recent Consultation on Education which show that out of a secondary school age population of 338,600 only 27,774 were receiving secondary education by the State — less than 10%.

Large scale unemployment in the age group 15 to 25; little or no secondary education. I certainly sense an emptiness to our existence — a lack of national purpose. Government takes over Shell or Caroni — it evokes no national fervor — no national feeling of pride. It all rings hollow to a people outside the pale of participation. Where are the institutions and forums for discourse and political education promised by the articulations of the national movement of 1956 to lift the perspectives of the national consciousness and to imbue the culture with pride and learning?

Where are they? The libraries are a scandal. As a matter of fact, we understand that the Central Library has now collapsed; the archives are non-existent for the population; the museum is a national disgrace and only reflects the contempt the PNM has for our history. After 12 years of independence, the Government does not have, in fact, has never had the self-confidence to open up the media to the Opposition, to allow the play of political opinion to inform the process of political education that they themselves promised in their early days of enthusiasm and hope. Rather they seek to restrain by legislation, by intimidation, the information media.

Destruction and degradation as far as I am concerned in the libraries, in the museum, in the media and last but by no means least and possibly most important, in the arts. The vestiges of the folk that have grown from slavery and indenture in the villages, they have flung with their mania for centralization onto their national stages; over-exposing the slim roots of the folk arts to the glare of the most insensitive political gimmick, the Prime Minister's Best Village Competition; at a time when we needed to coax and nurture it and let it sink deep roots in the communities.

Yes, I wonder if Mr. Dumas realized how well he described the situation, "We are in a state". And that is why constitution reform has to do with fundamentals; the issue is not simply about Republic vs Monarchy or about ballot boxes vs voting machines. Constitution reform has to do with the way the society is constituted literally. It has to do — in our context — with the hopes and dreams and aspirations of a people coming out of the impotence of the old colonial period longing and searching for a just and humane existence.

As a matter of fact, constitution reform is a fundamental quest for discovery of ourselves as a people. And that quest is the responsibility of our generation; it is the demand of our time. Everywhere you turn, anyhow we look, we see decay. In the courts there is no trust. In Parliament there is no representation; men just go through the formalities of Parliamentary procedures. The church is split. The army is in upheaval. The police are being used openly to terrorize our people. The Government is literally ruling by corruption, bribery and by intimidation.

There is no trust, and nothing more defines a revolutionary crisis like

when there is no trust in the institutions of State or in the political leaders. When there exists a void between the people and the Government; between the people and the institutions of state. The happenings in this country over the last years have made that crystal clear. That is why more than ever now we cannot fail to face the basic issues. It is the signal demand of our times. We have to write our contract as an independent people. We have to lay the framework of nationhood. And we cannot shirk that responsibility.

2. On the national stage today, we are witnessing the demise of a political movement that generated hope and trust in the 1950's but unfortunately failed to carry the population into new realms of participation and humanity; a movement that fell victim to the strictures of impotence and Crown Colony rule. But we are also witnessing on the world stage the end of 500 years of European domination. The independence of those territories in Africa from Portuguese rule is the end of European hegemony over the entire world.

That period, those 450 to 500 years of colonial domination, has enormous and fundamental consequences for all of us. Because it has built into the entire world system three basic forms of colonization, I think it is important that we examine that background to understand the basic issues that our people have been trying to come to terms with since Cipriani began the attack on Crown Colony rule.

It set up, in the first place, colonies of large scale settlement of Europeans in places like Canada, Australia, New Zealand. In another context, Europeans spread into the New World, conquered indigenous populations in the New World, and also in Africa and set up systems of Government over those populations.

The third and possibly the most significant case for us; is that case in which they destroyed the indigenous populations and literally set up a system of Government, system of society that was totally exploitative of the people whom they brought in to replace the indigenous populations that they destroyed. That example is richly illustrated here in the Caribbean. And in terms of the Caribbean, Trinidad is possibly the most important single example of that type of exploitation. We have literally been an experiment in society; people thrown together, brought here, some came, but thrown together on the ravages of the plantation system.

It has developed a social system that had built-in conflict and engendered discrimination. An economic system that was totally foreign dominated and in which participation for the large masses at home was literally non-existent, and most important of all is that it generated a political and governmental system in which the rule was one man. The Governor was the boss; it was Governor politics and that was all. There was no participation in the political system, in the governmental system, under Crown Colony status and we have never had the experience here of genuine participation in the early days. And I want to say that we do not have it now.

It said that we were not fit to rule, a people treated with contempt by the imperial power, not capable, not responsible for our own destiny. The tragedy of that is that we ourselves have wallowed in that same kind of contempt, self-contempt at home. We have been a people literally drifting in a sea of irresponsibility, manipulated from outside, huddled in a corner of the civilization in which Naipaul has demeaningly referred to us as the Third World's third world.

We have been on more than one occasion referred to as the bottom of the heap; the lowest rung of the ladder; that was the psychological dimension to imperial rule and colonial domination. It was a situation that forced us to look at ourselves and cringe. So that when the national movement arose in 1956, riding on the work and the attempts laid by Cipriani in the twenties and Butler in the thirties, to drive back that view of ourselves, it offered noble horizons. We have to understand that.

It articulated a set of feelings the people had — morality in public affairs, political education, federation, social and economic equality. It engendered hope. It gave our population something to rally around and the call of that period in the 1950's — the call around which people rallied for a new dispensation, a new possibility — was from Slavery to Chaguaramas.

The crisis we are facing in Trinidad is that that has failed; those hopes, dreams and those longings have failed. That is the fundamental issue that we are looking at when we talk about the need to reconstitute. That failure is embodied in this constitution — the 1962 Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.

That Constitution reinforced the principle of Crown Colony rule and attempted to halt the political advance. That Constitution established a system of Government which only changed the name of Governor to that of Prime Minister. It changed Governor politics to Doctor politics, it reinforced that whole view of ourselves as a people not responsible enough to participate in our own destiny and forge our own future. That is the tragedy of that constitution. It left significant and important control in the hands of the Chief Executive and it embodied the failures of the PNM that were becoming apparent as early as the late 1950's. Certainly the independence that we ushered in in 1962 in no way captured the hopes and the aspirations of the movement that started in 1956. There was conflict with the population from the very beginning of the 1960's.

The Wooding Report, in fact, on page 5, states:

"The Constitution under which Trinidad and Tobago achieved independence in 1962 was in all its essentials a written version of the constitutional arrangements evolved in the United Kingdom over many centuries."

The basic issue, as I said before, was not raised at Queen's Hall as to whether that constitution fitted our needs, our aspirations and the background

of our conditions here in Trinidad and Tobago. The conflict with labour was the very beginning of that gradual trek from Chaguaramas to Slavery. Labour in the middle 1960's. In 1968, the students in all their number from the University, the students from the secondary schools. And in 1970, the culmination of all those attempts by the population to face up to the tragedy of the national movement of 1956. It exploded in the upheavals of 1970, and the reasons for that upheaval are clear and need to be stated if we are to understand the juncture we have reached, and if we are to understand where we must go from here.

3. The consequences of the constitutional stand of the PNM in 1962 have been to ensure that Parliament continues to be non-representative of opinion. It blocked the avenues of expression. I often wonder when I hear the Leader of Government Business in the Senate say that 'the people will express their views on these documents through the various channels' what he means. I would like him to identify what those channels are. And when you couple with the fact of non-representation in Parliament the economic facts of 1970, it gives us a much more vivid story. We always repeat this in Tapia.

My brother Senator has already introduced those statistics here in the House. I am going to repeat them and we will repeat them over and over again because we are dealing with a population that is largely of African and Indian descent; well over 80%. Look at the question of business control taken from 1970 study done by Carnejo — 53% owned by whites, 24% by off-whites, 10% mixed, 9% Indian and 4% African. After twelve years of independence and eighteen years of PNM rule.

Look at landholdings, we will see 1% of the landowners owned 25% of the land. A quarter of the acreage, leaving out Crown Lands, were in forty holdings of over 1,000 acres and a half of the acreage was in holdings of 510. Only 18% of the land was held in parcels of under ten acres. In Trinidad and Tobago today, the major sectors are still largely foreign dominated, owned and controlled. We have been operating a policy of industrialisation by invitation which has encouraged and reinforced the domination of the economy from outside. We have been carrying forward the colonial view that we are not capable of managing and operating and controlling our own economic enterprise.

What the figures indicate is that between the years 1957 and 1965 inflows of investment capital averaged 86 million per year, but that was matched and exceeded by outflows which were somewhere in the vicinity of 110 million per year, and in 1966 the outflows were one and a half times the inflows. So the investment we have been building Trinidad and Tobago with has been generated largely from local sources.

We have to see that the political and Governmental system and the type of economy we have been operating is a consequence of the constitutional arrangements that we decided upon in 1962 when we institutionalised neo-

colonialism because it refused to bring people constitutionally into the corridors of governmental decisions, into the process of political and economic decision making.

That was the fundamental error and people came out in their numbers and demonstrated and attempted to articulate those feelings. People attempted to say that we have failed in our endeavours and we must look for some way to build anew. But the consequences of that imperial attitude was not to open up the system, not to open the media, not to open the problem and let discourse rule. No, the Government answered our young people — we who marched in the streets for a new dispensation — with repressive legislation and political bribery.

In 1974 the statistics now show that we have replaced the colonial elite by a new elite. It is what Vernon Gocking has called the oligarchy and I heard my brother Senator refer to it when he asked whether we will have a democracy or an oligarchy. Gocking referred to that elite as comprising leaders in politics, in industry, in commerce, in unionized labour and in the professions and those who surround them and profit from their activities. The national movement has built a situation in which you have a small prospering elite and the large majority of the population living below the poverty line, 70% of the households, the official figures show, live below, well below, the average household income in Trinidad and Tobago.

That, Mr. Vice President, is where we are today. That is where we have reached after twelve years of independence. That is the background from where we must proceed in the future.

We know what it means when people refer to conditions in Trinidad and Tobago as conditions that are being generated from outside. We understand that what we are attempting here is bigger than each individual or each Senator or each one in this country.

We know that we are living in a period in which the entire civilization is standing in decay. A people looking for hope and longing for a new order. We are here in Naipaul's Third World's third world. We are here at the bottom of the heap. DeGaulle called us specks of dust in the ocean. We stand here in the year 1975 literally naked, shorn of our manhood . . . at the bottom of the heap, at the base of civilization.

Power To The People

Tapia's perspective therefore begins in the realm of the spirit. That is where constitution reform begins. It starts with the individual and with the personality. The vehicle that we have suggested for constitution reform and we live for that, is *unconventional politics*.

Unconventional politics is not that we are not interested in elections as we often hear in the media. Unconventional politics is a method and mode of political organization and mobilization that departs from the norm; it is the building of political organization from below.

You have to dirty your hands in the communities, in the give and take of political discourse to win your political spurs.

You cannot start in 1955 and win it in nine months because in that way you never come of age as a political party. Unconventional politics is about your understanding and experience of government as distinct from politics, setting roots in the community, building by our own endeavour and developing a programme, a set of plans and dedicated men by dint of hard political work. That is the vehicle to discover the process of moral resurgence — the process of spiritual revival. And that is the first fundamental underpinning of Tapia's foundation for constitution reform.

The second is *economic reorganization and social equalization*. The late Rt. Hon. H.O.B. Wooding and the Commissioner on page 5, paragraph 23, of their Report state:

"We are aware, however, that constitutionalism will not work in Trinidad and Tobago unless a fundamental re-orientation of the economic priorities in the country is undertaken."

It is essential. It is important. It is fundamental. And that is why when we discuss constitution reform, the proposals we are making for the organisation of Government have to relate to the proposals that we are making on the question of economic re-organization. Both must work together if we are to make the breakthrough that not anyone of us can say for sure we are going to make but that which we hope and build for.

It is the infrastructure that we put down in terms of political organization and in terms of the institutional arrangements, it is the infrastructure which we put down that will indicate the extent to which we can shift the system of economy and shift the system of participation in the governmental process.

For us, therefore, localization is the key and that is not the transferring or control of one industry or another from New York or from London or from Holland to the Central Government. It is about placing the decisions about economic enterprise in the localities, in the communities, of putting the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the citizens of the country.

Of course, coupled with that is the whole question — and I am only sketching the proposals that we are making — is the whole question of the break-up of the metropolitan sector and metropolitan control.

The important factor — is that to deal effectively, to deal fundamentally, with the control of the economy which resides outside of the country, to deal effectively with it the people of the country must rally behind the political dimension. That is the only fundamental way we can deal with it. If people are not rallying and are not seeing themselves as part of the political process and part of the governmental system, if people do not see themselves in that dimension, then we cannot begin to break-up the control and domination of the economy from outside.

We have to bring the people into the process of government and we have to understand that it has important consequences for economic reorganization. We must break-up metropolitan control. There is absolutely no doubt about that. We have to reorganize public utilities, and we have to make an immediate attempt to deal with the question of full employment; and that is something we are going to deal with now.

How can we sit down and look at a population in which the young people are scrunting on the blocks. How can we sit down and look at that and not outline a perspective to deal with the question of unemployment? If we understand the dimensions of political change and if we understand the mode of political organization and the governmental systems that proceed from them, then we would see that the question of full employment is not evasive, it is not lurking in the next ten years. It is something to deal with 'now for now', as we like to say in Trinidad and Tobago.

Break-up of metropolitan control, reorganization of utilities, full employment, an incomes policy that establishes a reasonable meaningful minimum wage and sets maximum rewards at the top, and fundamentally important is the full community ownership and control of the basic factors producing goods and services. These are only sketching in broad outlines the perspective that we have for economic reorganization — in very broad outline.

The third and fundamental foundation, therefore, of our proposals is *Constitutional Reform*. It is on those foundations that we are effecting the scheme, the format for institutional change. Solomon Lutchman in his reservation to the Wooding Report on page 145 says, and I quote:

"To utilize their collective experience people must be given tools with which they are familiar, and rules with which they are familiar. The changes must be clearly those demanded only so that they are, in fact, improvements on the familiar."

Our historic task, therefore, and when I say 'our historic task' I am referring to the task of the population of Trinidad and Tobago, is to answer honestly, sincerely, and squarely the yearnings and demands of the 1970 February Revolution in a constitutional framework. We cannot sit by and

talk about it as irresponsibility and of people simply letting go steam, of a carnival mentality. We cannot deal with that in the year 1974.

We have to face what those demands are, what is the meaning of that entire upheaval that began in 1968 and is still with us. The crisis that is going through and through the society day in day out. We must understand, we must face the meaning of it. That is our historic task. It is in that context that our proposals for the reform of the institutions of state are designed to bring the common citizen, the little people as some refer to it, into the corridors of government for the very first time.

And, of course, bearing in mind the reservation that I have quoted from Lutchman, our proposals are not unmindful of the progress out of slavery and indenture and from Crown Colony government towards limited participation. We have taken that factor into account. The important thing about Constitutional Reform is that it must lay bridges between what exists now and what we are proposing in the future. So that the population living in a system with a set of habits, a set of ways of proceeding can understand the way in which we move from here to there.

That is the important thing, we must build those bridges; but the factor that we have to bear in mind is that those bridges must lead to progress. It must carry the population forward, it cannot set up blockades to hold back the aspirations of an independent people, it must carry us into new green pastures, and that is what we are attempting to do. We are taking into account what has gone before. We are understanding the experience that we have come from. We are probing the depth of intellect and experience, as Dumas puts it in one of his reservations, probing the depth of it, understanding the fundamental and basic issues, the forces, the large forces on the world stage that have brought us to this juncture. We are understanding that.

We are seeing the demands and the yearnings of a population striving for a new world. We are understanding and making interpretations of the meanings of the upheavals that confronted us since 1968. We are understanding that. We are setting down institutional guidelines to carry the population forward, to bring people into the corridors of government, into the process of decision-making into power. It is the first time we are attempting to do so.

Our proposals are simple; they are easy to understand and they fall under five broad heads.

* *Human Rights*: rights are a major issue of the present day. The entire civilization as I pointed out before is crying for a humane existence, crying out for it. In our context the government have given their answer to that cry following the upheavals of 1970. As I said before, they have unleashed a range of repressive legislation against our people, systematically eroding our rights and freedoms.

And that did not begin in 1970. I want it to be placed on the record — it did not begin then.

The first important signal of that was: The 1963 Commission of Enquiry into Subversive activities; from that time, it has followed a course that has led us to the 1964 State of Emergency, the 1967 ban on literature, the exclusion of Carmichael in 1968, the 1970 State of Emergency, right down to the unsuccessful attempt to introduce the Public Order Bill, in 1970 and I have to add, of course, the successful enactment of the provisions of that Bill under the cover of a State of Emergency in 1971 by way of an Act to amend the Sedition Ordinance, the Firearms Act and the Industrial Relations Act.

The irony of all of this is that these pieces of legislation deny us rights that are supposed to be constitutionally guaranteed; but they are guaranteed in such an absolute way as to make subsequent infringement inevitable and so justify the discretion of the Government, also constitutionally sanctioned, to alter and abridge them as well.

In Tapia, we are proposing that any new Constitution should state clearly both the rights of the citizen and the limits of those rights and that no covenant should have the authority to infringe those rights other than during a State of Emergency declared only under specific conditions and under Parliamentary review within 14 days of its declaration.

And we add to that the need for a constitutional court with the specific task of constitutional review so that people can take issues of legislation under the Constitution before Judicial review. It cannot be left to the citizens to commit an act — and then challenge it. That right must exist before; and we are saying that the Constitution Court is the way in which that should be handled.

So the first head we are dealing with under constitutional reform is a question of rights.

* The second is *Electoral Reform* and, like our proposals for constitutional reform, in the narrower sphere of electoral reform, we are seeking for wider involvement. We certainly envisage a House of Representatives somewhere in the vicinity of 75 to 100 members; we are not worried about the cost. We are worried about representation; that is what we are worried about. (a) Representation; and (b) trust in the electoral system. Trust in terms of representation.

Therefore, our demands include the reduction of the voting age to 18; automatic registration of all eligible voters; radio and television time for all parties and political groups, and we are not asking for it to be given free. We, in Tapia, have attempted to buy this time but the legislation does not allow it and that is nothing short of a scandal in a country that talks about democratic principles. The radio and television media must be open for discourse; how can we build a culture of genuine participation? How can we set noble goals if we do not open up the avenues for discourse and discussion? How can we do it?

Representation and, trust in the election machinery. People are calling for ballot boxes and we say if a lot of people are worried about the whole question of voting machines and they feel safer with the ballot boxes, if that is what people want, it is all well and good.

But we understand that that is not the fundamental problem in terms of the electoral system; it is not whether you have voting machines or ballot boxes — what is fundamentally important, and it is fundamentally important because the country is living without trust either in the institutions of State or in the political leaders, and to be able to answer the call for genuine and reasonable election procedures — we are saying that the fundamental question is the control of elections.

That control resides under the Boundaries and Elections Commission which is itself under the control of the Government — the ruling party. So that, we are saying that if we are to develop trust in the electoral system we have to remove that responsibility from the party controlling the Government and we must place it in our scheme of things in the Senate. That is what we are proposing and I will deal with the Senate in a short while.

Or, if we want, if the Senate is still not able to handle it then put it in the hands of an All-Party Commission and let all those people who are in the electoral process dealing with change in that area, let them organize the elections.

The final demand with regard to the question of electoral reform is Proportional Representation and we have a very open mind on this in Tapia because we understand what people are saying in their call for Proportional Representation. What people are fundamentally saying is that they want proper representation. We are saying that those people who are calling for Proportional Representation must specify the ways in which political participation for the large majority of the people can be ensured by the process of Proportional Representation.

In our scheme of things in which we are proposing an expanded Senate we are not worried about the question of representation but, we understand the factors under which people are demanding that particular system. So that is the second — the electoral system.

* The third is the question of *Local Government* and Local Government for us is fundamentally important when we look at it against the background of our philosophical premise that men are created free, equal and responsible.

We are opposed to this stranglehold which the Central Government has over the population at large and certainly has a stranglehold which is killing initiative, killing the growth of responsibility, killing enterprise. You have to open it up, not by talk only, not only by the method of political organization but, you have to open it up in the governmental system to place the responsibility in the localities and in the communities. The local community we say therefore, must become a basic unit of Government and a specific identification which will help us to rediscover confidence, will help

enterprise to grow and which will certainly allow us an opportunity to transform the economy.

We say, therefore, that a system of genuine local government bodies must be established as a means of decentralising governmental authority and placing responsibility directly in the localities; integrating the local communities into the system of national planning and administration; and creating an essential part of the institutional framework for bringing the economy under the control of the people.

They hang together. The whole thing is a scheme. Localisation in terms of economic re-organisation, Local Government in terms of the governmental process. We see the country, therefore, being divided into 25 municipalities -- not only Point Fortin. Twenty five municipalities. That will make localization of the economy possible. We envisage Local Government with powers of taxation, some of which will be centrally collected; with responsibility for the Police, responsibility for fire, education, health services, housing and for banking.

We envisage a situation in which the Local Government bodies will bargain with Government over the allocation of funds, which is quite radically different from the present system in which County Councils and City Councils exist at the pleasure of Central Government. We have confidence. We do not only feel that we are going to make a dent here in Trinidad and Tobago. We stand proud and bold, knowing that we can change, not only here, but what we do can have meaning in the entire civilization that has itself brought us to the state that we are in.

In terms of Local Government, I just want to say that we do not feel Tobago can be relegated to any County Council status. We feel that Tobago is a special case. We feel that the complexity of its problems, its location, the aspirations and history of its people, demand that it be given a higher degree of autonomy. We are proposing a Council for Tobago which will have a number of responsibilities, not unlike the responsibilities of the Central Government here, but which will liaise and co-ordinate its planning and co-ordinate its activities with the Central Government. That is the third proposal, Local Government.

* The fourth, which is the fundamental departure that we are making from the existing constitutional arrangement, is the *big 'maco' Senate*. That is the fundamental departure. We have heard Senator Julien, who has sat here through all the debates and intrigues and discourses of the Senate, defend the contribution that the Senate has made to the progress of Government over the years and we have heard him say that one of the problems is the automatic majority of the Government which has made the Senate a mere rubber stamp.

We are, therefore, proposing a Senate which is quite different from that which we have today. We are proposing a Senate of anywhere from 150 to 600 members. That is what we are proposing, a Senate of anywhere from

150 to 600 members, selected by a wide range of community interests and subject to recall at any time by the interests they represent.

The most important task of our re-organized Senate will be on the First Reading of all bills. When we say First Reading, we mean the meaningful reading in which there is debate, so as to ensure that public opinion will be brought to bear on legislation at all times at close quarters and under Parliamentary cover.

We are not talking about that Senate in abstraction, as some of those on the other side might feel. We are talking about that Senate in response to the demand of a wide cross section of our community for a more effective influence on the activities of professional politicians in Parliament and in the Executive.

Senator Julien just raised the question of representation in terms of the composition of the Senate. We are carrying that further because we see, as I said before, that in 1970, the youths and other groups were calling for power to the people, and in pursuance of which they instituted the People's Parliament. The significant point was that the call for power to the people and the institution of the People's Parliament, was coming from the left, if you want to put it that way.

What is also significant is that in 1970, from a different quarter in the society there arose another call for participation. In the Trinidad Guardian of July 20, 1970, under the headline "*The Parliament That Never Was*", Civicus urged the scrapping of the Senate and the expansion of the elected members of the Lower House to 60.

However, the House was to include Independents, without voting power and in number large enough to embrace a wide range of interests. The idea was that they should be chosen by the House itself and not by the Executive. That is the first thing. They say, scrap the Senate. Let us have one House, but let us have Independents in that House, not chosen by the Executive but chosen by the House.

Civicus further suggested that the House should invite members to speak on particular topics under debate on which they might have expert knowledge, and posed the question, "whether as a representative body Parliament's membership presented a broad spectrum of informed public opinion so as to speak, for manufacturers, lawyers, businessmen, trade unionists, academics, engineers, accountants, as well as the man in the street?"

So, what is monumental about that call, emanating from the right, if you want to put it that way, is the call for a larger representation of interests. When you add to that also in 1970, the grand remonstrance over the Government's attempt to introduce a Public Order Bill, it provides another set of evidence of the need to institutionalize community opinion. The Public Order Bill was defeated by the voices of dozen of citizens and groups. If such groups were permanent bodies on a national scale, the provisions of the Public Order Bill would not have been passed in a different way later on.

So we are saying that there is a demand from the population for an Institution representing public opinion in the corridors of Government and we are saying that Institution is not the House of Representatives, but an expanded Senate which brings together interests, not elected or appointed by the Government, but put in the House by the interests that they serve.

By: trade unionists, professional associations, calypsonians, steelbandmen, youth groups, art groups, community interests of one kind or another, the University, the Church — that whole range of interests that exist in the country and can therefore, expose their views and opinions which would capture the attention of the population at large.

That is what we are proposing — to inform the process of Government and to inform the process of politics. That is what we are proposing in terms of the Senate and we feel that a Senate of that kind, independent in make up and articulating opinions in the country, should have specific powers. Power of the appointment of watchdogs, such as the Auditor General; administration of the Elections and Boundaries Commission; the appointment of the President of the Republic, who we envisage as retaining a largely ceremonial position.

We see the Senate having the power to institute Commissions of Enquiry into public affairs and to conduct annual wage bargaining on a national scale. So we are going to deal with the question of wage bargaining in the Senate because that is how the economic position will develop in relation to proposals we are making for economic development.

Most important in terms of our whole political history and important in terms of the political discourse that must continue to flow in this country, is that we see the Senate supervising the State's interests in the mass media and all national trusts. So, we feel that the Senate, large in number and widely representative of opinions, would provide the basis for national, informed and wise administration and that this is why we do not feel that it will in any way restrain the process of development.

* Because the fifth head we are talking about is the *Executive*. In the Caribbean we are accustomed, as we all know, to the Prime Minister being the focus of political and Governmental activity. That is part of our political culture and in our scheme of constitutional reform this will remain. What is important is participation.

We are proposing that participation will counter-balance executive power. The Executive will be informed and guided by opinion and therefore be wiser and stronger. The fundamental factor about entering such an era of responsibility and participation is that, it will allow the whole process of Government — the deliberations, the discourse, the debates, to be informed by public opinion at governmental level. And Government, in that context, will act in harmony with the aspirations of the citizens.

Our proposals therefore, brothers and sisters in the Senate, seek to answer the cries for 'power to the people'. We seek to locate the population at large in the corridors of government and we are setting the stage for a calculated advance into the realms of participatory democracy and hence for the survival of genuine constitutional politics.