



Tribute to
Former Prime Minister
Patrick Manning
August 17, 1946-July 2, 2016

delivered by
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Minister of Finance and Acting Prime Minister

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Madame Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of Trinidad and Tobago's finest sons, Patrick Augustus Mervyn Manning, our former Prime Minister, Opposition Leader, and Political Leader of the Peoples' National Movement. He was a statesman, a visionary and perhaps the best demonstration of a career Public Servant. Today we mourn the passing, not only of a man, but the end of an era in the political history of Trinidad and Tobago. There will never be another Patrick Manning. No one can take his place, or do what he did.

Mr. Manning was born on August 17th, 1946 and, but for the times when he served this country as Prime Minister and resided in Port of Spain, remained a southerner to his heart until his passing two days ago. A former student of Presentation College, San Fernando and the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies, and a geologist by training, Mr. Manning served as Member of Parliament for the San Fernando East constituency from 1971 until 2015. His record of 44 unbroken years of Parliamentary service is likely to remain untouched for a long time to come.

He was the fourth and the sixth Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, from December 1991 to November 1995 and again from December 2001 to May 2010. He was also Political Leader of the People's National Movement (PNM) for 23 years, from 1987 to 2010.

He was also the Leader of the Opposition twice, from 1986 to 1990 and again from 1995 to 2001.

There is much that has been said about Mr. Manning since his passing. He has been described by many as the quintessential statesman, always elegantly clad, smiling with the public and very affable in his interactions with others.

Those who were brave enough to meet him on the domino table though, knew the danger that lurked behind his smile, for he was calculating, strategic and simply brilliant at the game.

His passion for the game of dominos, nurtured and developed during his academic sojourn in Jamaica, was matched only by his passion for music, and classical music at that.

It was that same passion he desired to instil in the hearts of the many young persons who became involved in the classical music band, Divine Echoes, which he saw as an instrument to expose youth to a more sophisticated form of music.

Madame Speaker, the national and regional outpouring of grief we have witnessed over the past two days comes as no surprise to the PNM, especially from our young and not so young citizens.

I was especially heartened to read the comments of some students who were “rescued” by Mr. Manning when their academic future seemed uncertain, because it was for them that he devoted a significant portion of his energy. He had a special interest in education, and the evidence of this fact remains there, for in successive budgets

under his stewardship, education received a huge portion of the national pie. He felt that once the country focused on education this would lay the foundation for our children to take up the mantle of leadership as they came of age.

Madame Speaker, you will recall that it was during my stint as Minister with responsible for Tertiary Education that I had the honour to introduce in 2004 the Government Assistance for Tertiary Education (GATE) programme. That singular act, fully supported, championed and enhanced by Mr. Manning in 2006, opened the gateway for thousands of citizens who, hitherto would have been unable to afford it, to pursue their dream of attaining a tertiary level education. When combined with the creation of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, there was an exponential increase not only in the numbers of persons accessing tertiary level education, but concomitantly, in the quality of life of our citizenry.

Such was the breadth of Mr. Manning's vision, Madame Speaker. And this is why he was always deeply hurt by the critics of his vision for Trinidad and Tobago, encapsulated under the banner of Vision 2020.

Today, as we pay tribute to him, we do so in a building complex, the International Waterfront Centre, that formed part of his vision for the regeneration and revitalisation of the city of Port of Spain. Only last week, our Honourable Prime Minister opened the new Tower that would house the Ministry of Education, and in the upcoming months,

we will open as well the Government Campus Plaza. Notable amongst those developments, Madame Speaker, is the cluster of buildings to house the Customs and Excise, the Board of Inland Revenue, Immigration and the Ministry of Legal Affairs buildings.

I am equally certain Madame Speaker that it must have been a source of concern for him to return to his beloved San Fernando to see the disassembling of his vision for the Chancery Lane Complex. Envisaged as a one-stop shop for a decentralised Government in the Southland, where the offices of the Attorney General, DPP, Ministry of Legal Affairs and a modern public Library, among many other public service offices, would have been housed, this magnificent building was designed to bring public service delivery in our second city into the modern era.

Madame Speaker, many of the initiatives of Mr. Manning were not obvious in his time, but today, on behalf of those of us on this side, we publicly say thanks to him for his towering vision and his foresight. Trinidad and Tobago would certainly not be the economic powerhouse that it is today without his leadership, particularly in the energy sector.

Countless examples of Mr. Manning's visionary and transformative leadership can be found throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, its effects transcending class, ethnicity, gender, religion and geography. From CDAP to GATE, to CEPEP, to UTT, to the

managed flotation of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar in 1993, described as “one of the best planned and executed policy intervention undertaken since Independence; Mr. Manning’s foresight, meticulous attention to detail, and ability to see farther than most, marks him out as a leader way ahead of his time. Indeed, he was the embodiment of the term “statesman”; someone who comes along once every few decades to make an indelible mark on society and the world at large.

He was associated with so many projects and innovations, too numerous to mention. When we were in Government, I recall his early morning calls, usually at 6 am, when he would call for an update on the new projects and programmes that we were working on in the various Ministries that he had appointed me to. I know that there were others that he called at 5 am every day! His appetite for new ideas and concepts that would transform Trinidad and Tobago was almost insatiable.

Mr. Manning was a prodigious task master, but always full of advice. He would always advise us to be open, to be attentive and firm. But above all, to be polite. And it was this respect for the other, which saw him treat the people of the Caribbean in a particular way. Mr. Manning was the epitome of the Caribbean man. Caricom, its progress and its challenges, were always dear to his heart, and he counted amongst his

personal friends, several of the region's Prime Ministers, past and present.

There is no doubt that the suddenness of his passing has allowed us to illuminate the abundance of his accomplishments, and particularly for us on this side, we know that we have lost a mentor and a hero of the PNM. It was his determination that rescued the PNM after the sound thrashing in 1991. It was his willingness to subject himself to criticism that allowed the PNM to claw its way back to power in 2001.

Mr. Manning was unique. He made great demands, first of himself and then of others. He refused to accept failures and remained undaunted by the prospects that something had not been done before. When he spoke, he did so with authority, and many wondered how he came to possess such knowledge, but he knew every detail of projects being undertaken by his government, and often took charge of the overall picture, shaping the details, one by one, willing to sacrifice popularity for the greater good of Trinidad and Tobago.

Today, I see our people in profound shock, with tears in their eyes, but I suspect that none could experience the grief of this loss more than the Manning family. And so, on behalf of a grateful nation, I say thank you to Hazel, David and Brian, for sharing with us the gift of their husband and father for the past 44 years. We know it came at a tremendous cost to you as a family, and for that we are heavily indebted to you.

Today I say to the citizens of this great Republic, that even in this our hour of darkness, the indomitable spirit of Patrick Augustus Mervyn Manning lives on, and therefore we must not lose our spirit. He left us a path on which we will continue to march with conviction and with faith. The peak of political, economic and social development to which he led us still remains open wide before us, and from it we could behold the landscape of the new tomorrow which we, the administration of today, will valiantly lead our people.

Madame Speaker, as the nation mourns Patrick Manning, on behalf of the PNM and the Government, I ask that there be prayers of unity and spiritual uplifting and we celebrate his life.

To paraphrase one of his most famous election war cries, as he continues on his journey to a better place, one he thought about often, we must let him know that he was admired and loved in the East, in the West, in the North, in the South, and in Tobago!

May he rest in peace.