

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

POLITICS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, 1956-2000:

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICS IN A “HALF-MADE SOCIETY”

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACDC	Action Committee of Democratic Citizens
ACS	Association of Caribbean States
<i>AES</i>	<i>Annual Economic Survey</i>
app.	appendix
<i>ASD</i>	<i>Annual Statistical Digest</i>
ATS&GWTU	All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union
BP	British Petroleum
BWIA	British West Indian Airways
CBTT	Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago
CCN	Caribbean Communications Network
CES	Centre for Ethnic Studies
<i>CI</i>	<i>Caribbean Insight</i>
CL	Caribbean Life
CLS	Committee for Labour Solidarity
COLA	Cost of Living Allowance
CPTU	Council of Progressive Trade Unions
CSP	Caribbean Socialist Party
CWU	Communication Workers Union
DAC	Democratic Action Congress
DLP	Democratic Labour Party
<i>EB</i>	<i>Economic Bulletin</i>
ESC	Emancipation Support Committee

FERTRIN	Fertiliser Company of Trinidad and Tobago
GOTT	Government of Trinidad and Tobago
GORTT	Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
<i>IFS</i>	<i>International Financial Statistics</i>
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRO	Inter-Religious Organisation
ISA	Industrial Stabilisation Act
ISCOTT	Iron and Steel Company of Trinidad and Tobago
<i>LARRCR</i>	<i>Latin American Regional Reports: Caribbean Region</i>
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LRC	Legislative Reform Committee
MATT	Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago
MUP	Movement for Unity and Progress
NAR	National Alliance for Reconstruction
NATT	National Alliance of Trinidad and Tobago
NATUC	National Trade Union Centre
NDP	National Democratic Party
NFL	National Federation of Labour
NJAC	National Joint Action Committee
NGC	National Gas Company
<i>NTT</i>	<i>News from Trinidad and Tobago</i>
NUFF	National Union of Freedom Fighters
NUGFW	National Union of Government and Federated Workers
ONR	Organisation of National Reconstruction
OWTU	Oilfields Workers Trade Union

PCS	Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PEG	Political Education Group
PEM	Political Education Movement
PEP	People's Empowerment Party
PETROTRIN	Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago
PNM	People's National Movement
PNP	People's National Party (Jamaica)
POPPG	Party of Political Progress Groups
PPG	People's Progress Group
PPG	Political Progress Group
PSA	Public Services Association
<i>QEB</i>	<i>Quarterly Economic Bulletin</i>
SARA	St. Augustine Research Associates
SDMS	Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha
sec.	section
suppl.	supplement
<i>TE</i>	<i>Trinidad Express</i>
TECA	Teachers Education and Cultural Association
<i>TG</i>	<i>Trinidad Guardian</i>
THA	Tobago House of Assembly
TIDCO	Tourism and Industrial Development Corporation
TLP	Trinidad Labour Party
TRINTOC	Trinidad and Tobago Oil Company
TRINTOMAR	Trinidad and Tobago Marine Petroleum Company
TTLC	Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress
TTMC	Trinidad and Tobago Methanol Company

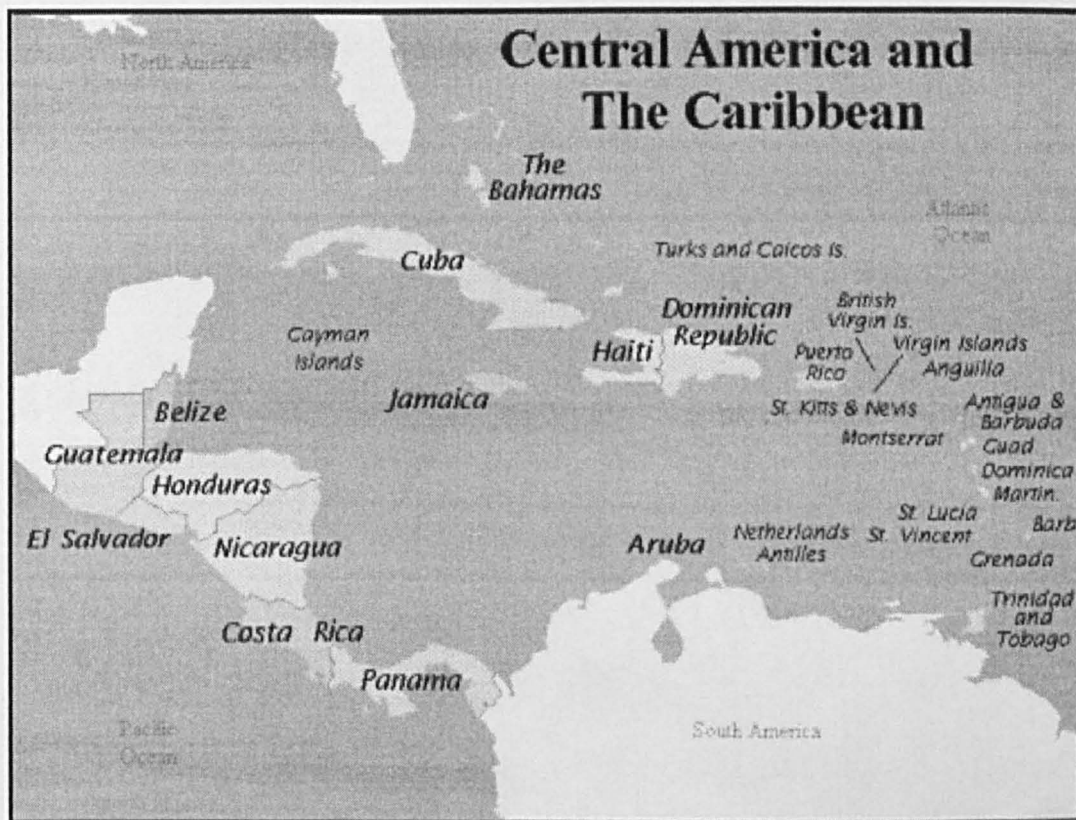
<i>TTR</i>	<i>Trinidad and Tobago Review</i>
TTT	Trinidad and Tobago Television
TTUC	Trinidad and Tobago Urea Company
TTUTA	Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TWA	Trinidad Workingmens Association
UF	United Front
ULF	United Labour Front
UNC	United National Congress
UPP	United People's Party
URP	Unemployment Relief Programme
UWI	University of the West Indies
VAT	Value Added Tax
WASA	Water and Sewerage Authority
WFP	Workers and Farmers Party
WIFLP	West Indian Federal Labour Party

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

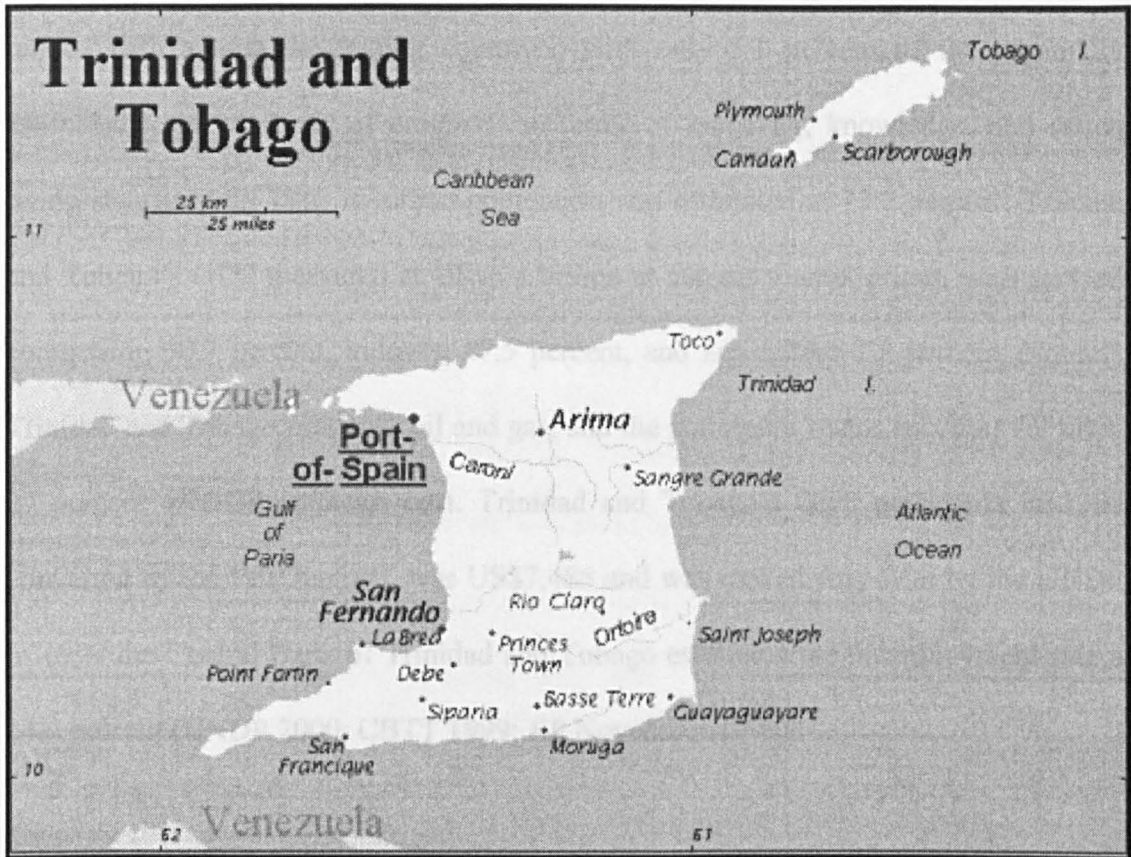
Trinidad and Tobago is a twin-island state composed of the two southernmost islands in the Caribbean archipelago. The island of Trinidad lies at the mouth of the Orinoco River and at its closest point is eleven kilometres from Venezuela (see Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2).

Figure 1-1. Central America and the Caribbean



Source: *Mindscape* (1995) (converted to greyscale by the author)

Figure 1-2. Trinidad and Tobago



Source: *Mindscape* (1995) (converted to greyscale by the author)

Trinidad and Tobago's combined area is 5,123 square kilometres, of which Tobago comprises 303.1 square kilometres. The population in 1999 was estimated at 1.29 million, and according to the 1990 Census was ethnically composed of Indians (40.3 percent), Africans (39.6 percent), Mixed (18.4 percent), White/Caucasian (0.6 percent), Chinese (0.4 percent), Other Ethnic Group (0.2 percent), Syrian/Lebanese (0.1 percent), and Not Stated (0.4 percent) (*ASD* 1990; 1996; *GORTT* 1993d; *CBTT* 1999).

After their administrative union in 1889, Trinidad and Tobago achieved Independence from Britain in 1962. Since 1961 it has operated a Westminster-derived system of parliamentary democracy, although the country became a Republic in 1976. In the *Human Development Report 2000* (UNDP 2000) Trinidad and Tobago ranked fiftieth out of a total of 174 countries in Human Development, placing it fourth in the category

of Medium Human Development. Trinidad and Tobago's Human Poverty Index was ranked fifth among developing countries, with only 5.1 percent of the population estimated to be "left out of progress" in terms of longevity, knowledge, and decent living standards. In 1998 its urban population was estimated at 73.2 percent. Trinidad and Tobago's GDP measured at US\$6.4 billion at current market prices, with services comprising 50.7 percent, industry 47.5 percent, and agriculture 1.8 percent. Notably, Trinidad and Tobago produces oil and gas, and the petroleum sector accounts for about 27 percent of GDP at factor cost. Trinidad and Tobago's GDP per capita in 1998, converted by the PPP method, was US\$7,485 and was ranked fifty-fifth by the UNDP. In 1999 the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago estimated the unemployment rate at 14.6 percent (UNDP 2000; CBTT 1999; *EB* November 1999).

This study is about politics in Trinidad and Tobago from 1956 to 2000. The original intention of the author had been to theorise about the transformations that have been occurring in Trinidad and Tobago. However, it was found that there was insufficient information available to enable the proper formulation of such theory. While gathering data and evidence, the author became convinced that simply establishing the facts of the period and presenting them in a coherent whole, as plainly as possible, was more important than the original theoretical project envisaged.

As a result, this study has in essence updated, revised, and extended leading Trinidadian political scientist Selwyn Ryan's seminal *Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago* (1972), which analysed the country's transition to nationhood and the problems it faced in the first decade of Independence. The present thesis consolidates research done since that book's publication and fills in the numerous and significant gaps with original research. The outcome, it is hoped, is a coherent and accurate account of the

historical operation of politics in Trinidad and Tobago that allows one to perceive a sufficiently detailed sense of the evolving whole, and provides a broad and sturdy base for further scholarship – empirical, comparative, and theoretical.

Perspective of the Study

No theoretical framework as such has been used in this thesis, and no theory has been tested. The author used a descriptive, historical narrative approach in presenting and analysing data, as is appropriate in presenting such a factually-based overview. Unlike Ryan's pivotal text, whose "principal aim" was "to explore the influence ... [of] cultural and ethnic diversity ... on the struggle for political and social reform and to suggest explanations for the failure of the programme of radical decolonization" (Ryan 1972, 3), the author of the present thesis has not employed a central hypothesis and avoided political suggestions. An open-ended, eclectic approach has been taken, for a number of reasons. Firstly, an openness to data as wide as practicable allowed a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the period and its dynamics to emerge, without the investigative limitations imposed by an hypothesis. Secondly, it is the author's opinion that theorising on Trinidad and Tobago's political development (except at the most general level) is premature: on the one hand, because of the insufficiency and impreciseness of the existing empirical material upon which such theory can be soundly constructed; and on the other hand, because of the author's conviction that Trinidad and Tobago remains an unsettled society which has been in fundamental flux for most of its history. Thirdly, the author sympathises with James Manor's argument in *Rethinking Third World Politics* (1991, 2-3) that paradigm-building and its implicit agenda-setting have undermined understanding of "how things actually work in Third World political

systems,” and that “attempts at prescription ... [have impeded] attempts to comprehend what is taking place” in these countries. Manor (1991, 2, 6) and his cohorts have favoured “thick description” over “parsimonious models” in order to arrive at “the most sophisticated possible understanding of how things actually work.” This thesis presents such a “thick description” of politics in Trinidad and Tobago.

Two important political studies dealing with Trinidad and Tobago have used a similar descriptive approach: *Black Intellectuals Come to Power* by Ivar Oxaal (1982) and *The Growth of the Modern West Indies* by Gordon Lewis (1968). As did the researchers in those studies, the present author acknowledges that “invisible rubrics, theoretical issues, and concepts ... have guided this narrative” (Oxaal 1982, xiv) but maintains that concentrating on them would have distracted and diverted from the main purpose of the thesis. The author does consider it important, however, to elaborate in this introduction two main sets of ideas guiding his perspective. First, the thesis displays many assumptions, predispositions, and arguments of classical conservatism as outlined by Jerry Z. Muller (1997) in his essay, “What is Conservative Social and Political Thought?” The general outlook includes an emphasis on human imperfection; an insistence on the limits of human knowledge and an attitude of “epistemological modesty”; a critique of “theory”; a mindfulness toward unanticipated consequences, latent functions, and the functional interdependence of social elements; a respect for the order of institutions; an appreciation of custom, habit, prejudice, and “second nature”; sensitivity to historical and particular contexts, and scepticism towards universalism; “anti-contractualism”; an “anti-humanitarianism” that is conscious of the sometimes perverse outcomes of well-intentioned actions; an acceptance of the necessity of trade-offs, costs, and limits, not uncommonly expressed in an ironic or tragic mode; scepticism towards written constitutions, as opposed to the informal, sub-political, and

inherited norms and mores of a society; the need for individual or socially imposed restraint and identity, and hence scepticism regarding projects intended to liberate the individual from existing sources of social and cultural authority; the legitimacy of a level of inequality and the need for elites, cultural, political, and economic; and the occasional need for “veiling” as opposed to transparency.

In addition to these philosophical tendencies, more specifically the author’s comprehension of Trinidad and Tobago has been strongly guided by Trinidad-born writer Sir Vidia Naipaul’s understanding of the country as an example of a “half-made society,” a term Naipaul coined in a 1970 essay on the Black Power movement in Trinidad and Tobago (Naipaul 1976, 271) and used again in a 1974 essay on Joseph Conrad (Naipaul 1981, 207-8). This seemingly harsh and dismissive sounding term highlights the fact that such societies have not yet established enduring, substantive standards of their own. They are societies still in formation and unmade, without a firm base (intellectual, cultural, political, military, and/or economic), and in which solidity is elusive. While this certainly does not describe everything about Trinidad and Tobago, it captures an important underlying historical essence that one can recognise in the empirical material presented in this thesis.

Statement of the Main and Subsidiary Research Questions

The major research question asked in this thesis was, what have been the main political challenges faced by the various governments of Trinidad and Tobago between 1956 and 2000? Subsidiary questions, indirectly explored, were: have there been distinctive problems, programmes, goals, methods, and/or themes transcending particular

governments and/or opposition? How far have racial and ethnic concerns dominated politics in Trinidad and Tobago? How did Prime Minister Eric Williams survive in office for five terms? How did subsequent Prime Ministers fail to win a second term?

With respect to the major research question, “main political challenges” refers to significant parliamentary, extra-parliamentary, legal, and extra-legal attempts to remove the government from power or office; actions that have resulted, by accident or design, in significant loss of electoral or parliamentary support for the government; and actions that have affected or attempted to affect government’s policies, programmes, or goals. It has been considered important to elaborate in detail by whom, on what issues, by what methods, for what reasons, at what times, and in what context and fora these challenges occurred. By “various governments” is meant the administrations formed after general elections. Between 1956 and 2000 there have been nine governments: five headed by Eric Williams from 1956-81, one by George Chambers from 1981-6, one by ANR Robinson from 1986-91, one by Patrick Manning from 1991-5, and one by Basdeo Panday from 1995-2000.

Throughout the thesis, ethnic terms have been employed according to their vernacular usage in Trinidad and Tobago. The terms “African,” “Negro,” “black,” and “Afro-Creole” are used to mean persons who identify themselves and/or are identified as being of African descent. Unless otherwise stated, such persons are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The terms “Indian” and “East Indian” are used to mean persons who are of Asian Indian descent and unless otherwise specified, are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. “Syrian,” “Syrian/Lebanese,” “Portuguese,” and “Chinese” refer to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago so descended, unless otherwise specified. “Local white” and “French Creole” are terms used to identify light-skinned persons of mainly European

descent who are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. "British," however, does not refer to British-descended citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The term "Creole" is generally used to refer to the non-Indian population and/or culture of Trinidad and Tobago.

The study is organised historically/chronologically, from 1925 to 2000, with greater emphasis placed on the relatively under-researched 1986-2000 period, and a short chapter looking at the 1925-53 period (the first twenty-eight years of electoral politics in Trinidad and Tobago). The thesis has been de-limited to broadly investigate not only formal politics, but social, cultural, and economic issues, challenges, and events (for example, protests, public opinions, attitudes, fears, sociological and psychological factors, race relations, ideologies, social movements, opposition parties, public policy and administration, constitutional changes, development policy, economic policy), but only insofar as they demonstrably have affected the administration of government programmes, elections, and political survival. As mentioned above, theoretical arguments have been avoided. The study's main limitation has been the broad time-frame which has prohibited deeper investigation into some of the more important and complex issue areas and events. In addition, some information gaps exist in the study due to a lack of sources. In some cases this was due to the impossibility of the author's access because of circumstantial constraints, in other cases because authoritative sources and material were non-existent. In such instances, less than authoritative sources have been used, such as newspapers and secondary reports.

Review of the Literature

As a whole, the body of secondary material on Trinidad and Tobago displays significant weaknesses. This includes the absence of sustained work and investigation, which has resulted in few published books and a patchy smattering of articles located in sundry journals with a less than systematic coverage of events and issue areas. Another major deficiency has been the empirical and factual failings of the material that does exist. Furthermore, the individual studies that make up the literature on Trinidad and Tobago politics seem to be largely disengaged from one another, with reference rarely being made to other researchers' work either in the text or in the bibliographies (when they are compiled). Through empirically-detailed, information-intensive "thick description" and systematic investigation, this thesis attempts to begin to fill in these perceived gaps.

Partly because Great Britain had acquired Trinidad and Tobago much later than it did its first West Indian colonies,¹ relatively little had been written in English on Trinidad and Tobago (cf. Lewis 1968, 197-8). Outside of comprehensive histories, academic study of politics in these islands began with Charles Reis's (1929) study of constitution and government in Trinidad (the first edition was published in 1915), followed thirty-seven years later by Hewan Craig's (1952) study of the Legislative Council of Trinidad and Tobago. Political study of Trinidad and Tobago in the colonial period usually took place within larger contexts, either the West Indies as a whole (e.g., Wrong 1923) or the colonies of the British Empire (e.g., Craig 1952). As the short-lived Federation of the

¹ For example, Barbados and Jamaica had been British colonies since 1627 and 1655, respectively. In contrast, Trinidad was captured by the British in 1797 and was formally ceded to Great Britain by Spain through the Treaty of Amiens in March 1802 at the end of the French Revolutionary Wars. British control of Tobago, which had been re-captured from the French in 1802, was confirmed and ratified in 1814 at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

West Indies (1958-62) came into being, Trinidad and Tobago's politics were placed more firmly in the context of developments in the West Indies. The studies of the Federal period mainly focused on constitutional developments towards self-government and displayed a concern with the country's political sociology and the gradually diminishing influence of the British (e.g., *Developments* 1955; Ayearst 1960; Lewis 1968; Mordecai 1968).

The Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of the West Indies (UWI) (established in Mona, Jamaica in 1947) was created in 1960 at the Mona Campus with a Department of Government teaching politics courses to undergraduates for the first time in the West Indies (Greene 1974, 1). In 1966, the Faculty of Social Sciences at the St. Augustine campus in Trinidad was founded.² Between these two events, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago achieved independence separately in 1962. These developments greatly stimulated academic production in the West Indies by West Indians.

Caribbean-wide studies continued to be published. Radical nationalists based at UWI developed the Plantation Thesis which had argued that the structural heritage of colonial plantation slavery continued to determine international and national economic, class, ethnic, and political relations, privileging metropolitan over local interests. Although the thesis exerted a strong influence in West Indian political science (e.g., see Munroe and Lewis 1971), serious development of the model was carried out by economists and sociologists (Best 1968; Beckford 1972; Craig 1982b).

² The author was a lecturer in the Department of Sociology/Behavioural Sciences at the St. Augustine campus of the UWI from 1995-8.

In 1974 the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was established out of the Caribbean Free Trade Area (formed in 1967), prompting political studies on the regional integration movement (e.g., Axline 1979; Payne 1980), which had come to concern itself with economic and “functional” co-operation and deliberately avoided moves toward closer political union. By the 1980s, the political concerns expressed in the Plantation Thesis became expressed more diffusely, without a necessary commitment either to the theory’s explanation of causes or to its recommended solution of at least partial disengagement from the world-system. At the same time, progress in regional integration seemed to be halted. The Caribbean-wide studies that were published in the 1980s continued to be concerned with the dominance of international over national interests and were stimulated by the failures of the socialist governments in Jamaica,³ Guyana,⁴ and Grenada⁵; the emergence of a strong anti-Communist US foreign policy under the Reagan Administration, embodied by the US invasion of Grenada in 1983; and the emergence of IMF and World Bank-sponsored structural adjustment programmes in the region (e.g., Henry and Stone 1983; Payne and Sutton 1993). By the 1990s there also developed a concern with the development of democracy in the region (e.g., Domínguez et al. 1993; Edie 1994) while regionally published undergraduate-level teaching texts were developed with a focus on comparative political institutions and administrative systems (Emmanuel 1993; LaGuerre 1997b). Ryan (1999b) has also recently published a book that has examined comparatively the experience of Westminster-derived government in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

³ Michael Manley was elected Prime Minister in 1972 and in 1974 declared his government’s commitment to a new policy of Democratic Socialism.

⁴ Since its first elections under universal suffrage in 1953, Guyana had been governed by socialist and Marxist-oriented governments. Guyana gained independence in 1966, and in 1970 declared itself a Co-operative Socialist Republic.

Since independence, however, serious study of politics in Trinidad and Tobago has taken place within a national rather than regional context. The most important text published has been Selwyn Ryan's *Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago* (1972). That study, as indicated above, provided a political-historical overview of the transition to nationhood and the problems faced in the first decade of independence, while having as its principal aims the exploration of the country's cultural and ethnic diversity on the struggle for political and social reform and the suggestion of explanations of the failure of the programme of radical decolonisation (Ryan 1972, 3). Despite its empirical gaps (in particular through its less than systematic account of post-independence politics, perhaps most notable in the omission of the 1966 elections), that book remains the most complete study published of the process of politics in Trinidad and Tobago. Professor Ryan (1999a, 1999b, 1996, 1991, 1989a, 1989b, 1988, 1979, 1978) has continued with great vigour his project of chronicling the political life of Trinidad and Tobago, providing a valuable resource for researchers beginning to explore politics in the country. Many of these publications (Ryan 1999a, 1999b, 1996, 1991, 1989a, 1989b) have been collections or slight re-workings of previously published newspaper columns (which he has been writing weekly since the 1970s), journal articles, and opinion polls (which he began on a national basis in 1976 [see Ryan et al. 1979]). However, weaknesses found in his first study – the concentration on racial and ethnic issues above all else and a parsimoniousness with regard to facts – have been combined with an increasing reliance on racially-categorised opinion poll data, rendering his later work in need of academic supplementation. In particular, the habitually incomplete data on elections, the limited analysis of general election results

⁵ The New Jewel Movement came to power through a revolutionary coup on 13 March 1979

(especially in comparison to analysis of his opinion poll data), and the almost total neglect of local government elections are shortcomings that need to be corrected.

Information gaps have been partially filled by such studies as those done on parliamentary and constitutional developments by Spackman (1965; 1967), Verner (1973), and Ghany (1997a; 1997b); on particular general elections by Premdas and Ragoonath (1998), LaGuerre (1997a; 1983; 1980), Yelvington (1987), Greene (1971), and Lewis (1973); on the 1990 attempted coup by Deosaran (1993), Ragoonath (1993), Collihan and Danopoulos (1993), and in the special issue of *Caribbean Quarterly* (1991); on the black power movement of 1970 by Meeks (1976), Craig (1982), Oxaal (1982), Sutton (1983), and Ryan and Stewart (1995); on labour union and political figures by Kambon (1988) and Ghany (1996); on the labour movement by Kiely (1996); on the opposition Democratic Labour Party by Malik (1971); on the National Union of Freedom Fighters by Meeks (1999); on dissident political groups of the unemployed by Canute Parris (1976); on the women's movement by Reddock (1994); on the "power elite" by Carl Parris (1983a; 1985; 1990); and on public policy and politics by Craig (1974), Nunes (1974), Parris (1975; 1976a; 1976b), Ince (1976), Fletcher (1990), Lloyd-Evans and Potter (1993), and Ryan et al. (1998).

This material has added useful information, but at best they provide a discontinuous and not fully consistent account of politics in the period under study. It should be noted, however, that Hamid Ghany's (1996) locally-published biography of PNM Cabinet Minister (1956-86) Kamaluddin Mohammed stands out, if not for its interpretation, then certainly for the impressive amount of primary research in government, Colonial

Office, and other authoritative records, covering a considerable period. Malik (1971) also provided much valuable information on the largely neglected period of the 1960s.

Most political research on Trinidad and Tobago – including Ryan’s – has concerned itself with conceptual issues, such as the development of nationalism and democracy, the role of ethnicity and class in Trinidad and Tobago’s politics, and the nature of government and the state. An enduring, classic study of the independence movement in Trinidad and Tobago was undertaken by Ivar Oxaal (1982; originally published in 1968), who along with Wendell Bell (1967) and Charles Moskos (1967) intensively examined the peculiar historical development of West Indian nationalisms while placing them in the context of “the spread and development of the democratic revolution through time and space from the eighteenth-century Atlantic community to the twentieth-century global society” (Bell and Oxaal 1967, 1). A concern with the development of West Indian nationalism is also at the heart of Lewis’s (1968; 1973) enterprise, which remains equally enlightening to this day. Unfortunately, this insightful body of work was not followed up to examine the developments since Independence. Since then, a study by Magid (1988) has been published examining the development of what he called “urban nationalism” in the period 1895-1903, but it was not well received on account of its interpretative and empirical failings (e.g., Knight 1990). Anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1992; 1993) has subsequently taken up the Trinidad and Tobago example (along with that of Mauritius) to examine the wider phenomenon of nationalism, but his theorisation is situated in the context of work on “identity politics.”

Working nationalism into questions of identity fits in with the most prevalent and enduring theme in the study of politics in Trinidad and Tobago: politics as an

expression of ethnic competition, the persistent theme in Ryan's work. This approach to political study spills over to and from anthropology and sociology. The major political studies (properly so called) operating from this perspective (besides the works by Ryan) are those by Rubin (1962), Bahadoorsingh (1968), Malik (1971), LaGuerre (1982), Clarke (1991), Ragoonath (1994), Dattoo (1994), Deosaran (1996), Brown (1999), Premdas and Ragoonath (1998), and Premdas (1999, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c). Rubin (1962) and Malik (1971) stand out as the most coolly analytical of these scholars,⁶ while Premdas represents the polemical and emotional extreme. Premdas's work, which has been building up to a critical mass, has significant weaknesses, particularly its curtness with evidence and data in what this author considers his haste to construct an ethnic conflict theory for politics in Trinidad and Tobago.

Ethnic competition undoubtedly is a major feature of politics in Trinidad and Tobago, but other researchers have understood this rivalry to be complicated, modified, and sometimes by-passed by political motivations based on class and other interests. The theorist operating most consistently from this perspective has been Percy Hintzen (1994; 1989; 1983) who has been developing a view which sees race as one of the tools which local elites have used to secure their political control and domination. Nicholls (1971), Ragoonath (1988), and Ledgister (1988) also have considered analytically ethnic and class motivations in Trinidad and Tobago politics.

⁶ Burton (1997) and Singh (1996) provide scholarly historical-anthropological-sociological studies on the evolution of Africans and Indians, respectively, as political actors in Trinidad and Tobago.

A few researchers have attempted to develop theories of the state and/or government in Trinidad and Tobago, but since the early 1980s this body of work has attenuated. A common theme among this work, represented by Best (1965; 1971), Sandoval (1983), Sutton (1984; 1979), Ashley (1983), Parris (1983a, 1983b), and Pantin (1991), has been the determination or limitation of national politics by the political economy of the international system. During the Williams era the development of a “presidential” or authoritarian style was commonly linked to the country’s structural situation. Updating this last point about domestic politics, Maingot (1998) has linked Trinidad and Tobago’s racially divided politics to the requirements of global capitalism.

Because so few books have been published on Trinidad and Tobago politics, MacDonald’s (1986) singular study is worthy of mention. In that work, he explains the relative success of democracy in Trinidad and Tobago by tracing the evolution of the country’s democratic-minded middle class (multi-racial in nature), sizeable state sector in the economy, oil industry, and accepted, yet controlled, foreign investment (MacDonald 1986, 1-2). Although the study stretches from the colonial era to 1983, adding a period not found in Ryan (1972) through original research, Ryan’s later works have eclipsed it.

These theoretical, conceptual, and interpretative studies have undoubtedly contributed to a greater understanding of politics in Trinidad and Tobago. However, there are common flaws in them. One is that since 1972, Ryan’s body of work has of necessity been the main authority cited by these theorists. His weaknesses and gaps, though remedied in part by the original research done in these other studies, have not been adequately redressed by them. Accordingly, theorising has proceeded on an incomplete and faulty empirical base. Another weakness, most especially seen in the work on

nationalism and in the (loosely Marxist-derived) theorising about the state, is that such theory has been overtaken by subsequent developments, sometimes in less than a decade. This vulnerability of theory is general and has been noted by Manor (1991, 8-9). Especially in an unsettled, rapidly evolving country such as Trinidad and Tobago, it is arguable that anything more than an extremely general theory will not stand the test of time.

It must be admitted that in this respect ethnic interpretations have been the most durable. However, the existing literature's inattention to data, its haste to conclude and recommend, and its intent to reduce Trinidad and Tobago's political reality to a simple, clear, and solvable (through power-sharing, consociationalism, or other recognition of pluralism) framework at times bypass the actual operation of politics. Simple ethnic models not infrequently exaggerate objective political reality, such as with Premdas's (1993b) overly ethnic view of the split in the NAR, and sometimes they do not account for important facts such as the entrenchment of the Afro-Creole led PNM and the fall in support for the Indian-led Democratic Labour Party and United Labour Front in the 1971-81 period, even though the Indian population increased in economic, cultural, and numerical strength during this time.

To remedy the weaknesses of the literature on Trinidad and Tobago's politics, it seems that the first necessary task is the carrying out of further solid, empirically-based, systematic, and durable research. This perhaps modest task is what the present thesis seeks to accomplish.

Research Design

The research conducted for this dissertation can be classified as a case study, developmental, exploratory, and/or a historical type, as defined in Mauch and Birch (1998). In essence, a reconstruction of political events has been attempted, mainly through the examination of written documentation. The research procedure has been fairly standard, with no substantial methodological innovation. Perhaps notable, however, is the extent to which the author has used official statistics (especially from the Central Statistical Office, the Central Bank, and the Elections and Boundaries Commission), public relations documents, memoirs, autobiographies, biographies, and speeches of major political personalities (Williams 1969; 1981; Brassington [1975]; Gomes 1974; Mahabir 1978; Solomon 1981; Kambon 1988 [on George Weekes]; Buhle 1988 [on CLR James]; Siewah and Moonilal 1991; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998 [on Basdeo Panday]; Ghany 1996 [on Kamaluddin Mohammed]). The other sources – local newspapers, official government reports, pamphlets, bulletins, monthly reports, and interviews – are typical in the field. The more diligent attempt at their systematic investigation is perhaps what is distinctive in this thesis. Regarding interviews, a total of nineteen persons who played important roles in politics, both in the past and at present, were interviewed specifically for this dissertation.⁷ These personalities included the present Prime Minister, the two living former Prime Ministers (who led different political parties and at the time of interview were the President and the Leader of Opposition), and five current and former Cabinet Ministers (see Appendix A). The interview data were rarely used directly in the thesis, but they

did provide valuable backgrounds against which were placed information gathered from other sources.

The seven substantive chapters of the thesis provide a detailed historical reconstruction of politics from 1925 to 2000. They are grouped into three parts covering the periods 1925-81 (chapters two through four), 1981-91 (chapters five and six), and 1991-2000 (chapters seven and eight). The first part is focused on the long reign of Eric Williams and the PNM from 1956 to 1981. Chapter Two outlines the establishment and development of electoral politics in Trinidad and Tobago between 1925 and 1953. Chapter Three follows the entrance of Eric Williams on the political stage of Trinidad and Tobago from 1954 through to the achievement of national independence in 1962 under the governance of the PNM, the country's first nationally organised party, which Williams led. Chapter Four looks at the peculiar challenges faced by Williams and the PNM from 1962 to 1981, including a collapsed parliamentary opposition, vigorous subversive extra-parliamentary protest movements, and the structural transformation of the Trinidad and Tobago economy occasioned by the over twenty-fold increase in oil prices over the period. The era ends with the death of Williams while in office.

Part Two examines the rise and fall of the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) party and government from 1981-1991. Chapter Five looks at the performance of the post-Williams administration under George Chambers from 1981-6, which ended in the first general elections defeat for the PNM. Chambers was faced with three major challenges in office: succeeding a charismatic political icon who had mastered the

⁷ In 1991 and 1994, a total of fifty-seven trade union leaders, non-governmental organisation leaders, and academic-activists were interviewed for the author's B.A. and M.Sc. research papers on

Trinidad and Tobago political environment, managing a more than 50 percent drop in oil prices, and fighting off a newly invigorated and consolidated political opposition, the NAR. He failed all three. Chapter Six reviews the NAR term in office, 1986-91, the party's split during its second year in office, the popular resistance to its policies of structural adjustment, the attempted coup of 1990, and the party's failure to secure a second term in 1991 despite its enthusiastic, unprecedented electoral mandate received in 1986.

Part Three looks at the political configuration of the 1990s after structural adjustment and the coming to power in 1995 of Basdeo Panday, the country's first Indian Prime Minister. Chapter Seven examines the 1992-5 PNM administration under the leadership of Patrick Manning in the context of a newly emerging political, social, and economic context: the stabilising of three major political parties, the newly confident Indian presence in the country's cultural mainstream, and the emergence from economic recession with a significantly transformed economy. In Chapter Eight the UNC administration is analysed from November 1995 up to May 2000, a few months before general elections are expected. The themes of the Panday government are discerned – a greater emphasis on law and order in society, national unity through the affirmation of cultural plurality, and a results-focused approach to economic and social development. However, despite great economic success, the Panday government has been on a consistent political “war footing” during its term in office.

The conclusion summarises the findings in relation to the main and subsidiary research questions and discusses the impact, implications, and recommendations for further study.

PART I

THE LONG REIGN OF ERIC WILLIAMS, 1956-81

CHAPTER 2

“WE ARE ALL INDIVIDUALS”: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTORAL POLITICS, 1925-53

In this chapter, we outline the establishment and development of electoral politics in Trinidad and Tobago, noting the conditions and pressures (both institutional and social) under which it operated and performed. Three Orders-in-Council – in 1924, 1945, and 1950 – were passed during the period covered in this chapter, each Order increasing the proportion of elected members in the Legislative Council, bestowing upon the elected members greater responsibility, and extending the franchise. Perhaps the most notable aspect of political organisation during this period was the absence of national parties. There instead existed a diversity of interests and groups – regionally, ethnically, and labour based – while political aspirants contested seats as independents or as members of loosely organised and short-lived parties.

It should be noted first that Trinidad, in particular, is among the most recently settled of West Indian islands. On 31 July 1498 during his third voyage, Christopher Columbus sighted the island, christened it “Trinidad,” and claimed it for Spain. But almost three hundred years later in 1783, the population of Trinidad was only 681 Spanish – 126

whites and 655 coloured – and 2,000 Amerindians (Pearse 1971). That year on 24 November, the Cedula of Population was issued from Madrid to encourage the settlement of French West Indian planters and their slaves. By 1797 the population was composed of 2,151 whites; 4,476 free coloureds; 10,009 slaves; and 1,082 Indians (Brereton 1981, 16).¹ On 18 February that year, during the French Revolutionary Wars, the Spanish Governor surrendered the island to the British. The opening up and settlement of Trinidad continued under British sovereignty with the migration from older and more populated West Indian islands (especially Grenada, Barbados, and St. Vincent, continuing up to the present day) following the British abolition of slavery in 1838;² the importation of 143,949 Indian indentured labourers between 1845 and 1917; and the smaller, but socially significant immigration of 866 French and German labourers in 1839-40; 1,309 free blacks from the US between 1839 and 1847; liberated Africans (3,383 from Sierra Leone and 3,198 from St. Helena between 1841 and 1861); 1,298 Madeirans beginning in 1848; 2,500 indentured Chinese labourers between 1853 and 1866; and Syrians and Lebanese at the beginning of the twentieth century (Brereton 1981, 96-115). Even before the abolition of slavery and the introduction of indentured labour, it could be said that “society in Trinidad was perhaps more like that of a typical frontier colony, with its mixture of nationalities and races, than any of the newly ceded islands [in the British West Indies]” (Armytage 1953, 6; also see Haraksingh 1993, 76-7).

¹ In total, it has been estimated that 22,400 slaves were imported into Trinidad in its slaving history. This is well below the numbers imported into Jamaica (747,500) and Barbados (387,000), for example, and represents only 1.3 percent of slave imports into the British West Indies as a whole (1,665,000) (Yelvington 2000, 72).

² An estimated 10,278 West Indian immigrants came to Trinidad between 1839 and 1849, while between 1871 and 1911 about 65,000 came. By 1897 there were about 14,000 Barbadians living on the island (Brereton 1981, 96-7).

Right up to 1964 (excepting seven years between 1944 and 1955) Trinidad and Tobago had experienced annual net immigration (ASD 1960; 1997). From only 2,631 in 1783 (2,000 of which were Amerindians), the population grew to 17,718 by 1797. In 1851, there were 68,600 inhabitants. Between 1851 and 1881 the population more than doubled, and by 1911 it more than doubled again (see Table 2-1).

Table 2-1. Population of Trinidad and Tobago, 1851-1921

Trinidad	
1851	68,600
1861	84,438
1871	109,638
1881	153,128
1891	200,028
1901	255,148
1911	312,790
1921	342,523
Tobago	
1891	18,253
1901	18,751
1911	20,749
1921	23,390

Source: *Census of the Colony of Trinidad and Tobago* (1923)

Even up to 1921, only 50.9 percent of the population were classified by the Census as having a nationality of "Trinidad" or "Tobago" (see Table 2-2).



Table 2-2. Population of Trinidad and Tobago by Nationality, 1921

Trinidad	159,236	43.5%
Trinidad, Indian Parents (both)	81,837	22.4%
Trinidad, Indian Father	1,580	0.4%
Trinidad, Indian Mother	649	0.2%
Tobago	27,051	7.4%
Barbados	16,744	4.6%
St. Vincent	10,113	2.8%
Grenada	12,838	3.5%
Antigua	701	0.2%
St. Kitts and Nevis	1,486	0.4%
Other British West Indies	4,529	1.2%
British North America	633	0.2%
British North America of Indian Parents	157	0.0%
Other British Colonies	633	0.2%
SUB-TOTAL	318,187	87.0%
India	37,341	10.2%
United Kingdom	1,389	0.4%
Naturalised British Subjects	193	0.1%
SUB-TOTAL	357,110	97.6%
Foreign West Indies	1,094	0.3%
Foreign West Indies, Indian Parents	77	0.0%
France	152	0.0%
Spain	50	0.0%
Portugal and Colonies	517	0.1%
Germany	20	0.0%
Italy	59	0.0%
Austria-Hungary	9	0.0%
Holland	27	0.0%
Denmark	19	0.0%
Sweden and Norway	10	0.0%
United States of America	294	0.1%
Venezuela	4,135	1.1%
South America	523	0.1%
China	1,334	0.4%
Africa	177	0.0%
Arabia	108	0.0%
Not described (or born at Sea)	198	0.1%
Total Foreign	8,803	2.4%
GRAND TOTAL	365,913	100.0%

Source: *Census of the Colony of Trinidad and Tobago* (1923)

From 1797 to 1925 Trinidad, unlike the other British West Indian colonies, had been directly ruled by Britain.³ In the nineteenth century political reformists centred in the capital, Port of Spain, in the north of the island (and to a lesser extent in San Fernando in the south) had begun agitation for representative government, without success.⁴ But soon after the victory of the Entente Powers in the Great War, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Major EFL Wood (later, the reforming viceroy, Lord Irwin), assisted by W. Ormsby-Gore and RA Wiseman, had toured Jamaica, St. Kitts, Antigua, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Barbados, Grenada, Trinidad, and British Guiana from 13 December 1921 to 14 February 1922 on behalf of Winston Churchill to make enquiries "for the bestowal of a measure of representative government" (West Indies 1922, 3; McIntyre 1974, 240).⁵ Major Wood recommended the introduction of elected members form a majority of the unofficial members in the various Legislative Councils, and that a two stage process be inaugurated in which the unofficial members would first form a minority, and later a majority (West Indies 1922, 8). While for most other islands (including Tobago)⁶, the introduction of elected

³ A *cabildo* system of government existed under Spanish rule, which partly because of Spain's administrative weakness, allowed greater local control than was experienced during the first decades of British rule under what became known as the Crown Colony system (Williams 1962a, 28-9; Brereton 1981, 2-23, 73-4; Craig 1952, 77-8). Under British rule, however, there existed three municipal councils (in Port of Spain, San Fernando and Arima, established in 1840, 1845, and 1888 respectively) with a limited franchise (Craig 1952, 79). In contrast, Tobago (administratively joined to Trinidad in 1889 and constitutionally united with it by an Order in Council passed in October 1898) had elected representation in the Council and Assembly of Tobago for over a century, from 1763 to 1877 (Brereton 1981, 154-6).

⁴ Brereton (1981, 142-157), Ryan (1972, 25-32), and Williams (1962a, 167-95) provide accounts of the nineteenth century reform movements and the Royal Commissions to which they made representations. The character of the movement, however, changed significantly in the early twentieth when the lower classes were brought into the agitation, through the 1903 Water Riots and the strike waves of 1919, turning many of the leading early reformers into supporters of Crown Colony government.

⁵ TA Marryshow in Grenada had successfully petitioned the Secretary of State, Lord Milner, to re-introduce elective seats in the Grenadian Legislative Council after the war, encouraging numerous similar requests from the other colonies (West Indies 1922, 5; Ayearst 1960, 33).

elements represented a restoration of earlier rights, in Trinidad it was a first under British rule.

Notably, the Report singled out Trinidad

as the one community which appeared largely to lack any homogeneous public opinion. Socially, it is divided into all kinds of groups which have very few relations with one another. There is a considerable French Creole element largely engaged in cacao-growing, French-speaking and preserving its own tradition. There is a Spanish element which is reinforced continually by intercourse with Venezuela. Above all, the Colony possesses a very considerable East Indian element, roughly 130,000 people out of a total population of 360,000, largely illiterate, speaking some five or six different languages, and living a life of its own. And lastly, in addition to the African and coloured element, there is an appreciable number of Chinese, mostly engaged in the retail trades. With a population so constituted, Trinidad is exceptionally cosmopolitan. It is the only one of the West Indian islands which contains mining enterprises on any substantial scale, and considerable capital has been embarked in asphalt and oil development by outside corporations. It is, accordingly, important that no action should be taken which would disturb the confidence felt by such capital in the stability of the local Government. (West Indies 1922, 22-3)

The Trinidad Chamber of Commerce,⁷ the Agricultural Society, and a Deputation of East Indians⁸ opposed any change to the Crown Colony system, while the Legislative Reform Committee, the Trinidad Workingmen's Association,⁹ and the East Indian National Congress favoured changes (West Indies 1922, 23-4). The East Indian

⁶ Major Wood was not able to visit Tobago, and expressed concern about his uncertainty about the views of responsible opinion there (West Indies 1922, 25-6).

⁷ Interestingly, the former organisation was at the forefront of the Trinidad constitutional reform movements in the nineteenth century (Williams 1962a, 216-7).

⁸ The deputation opposed any introduction of elected members, communal or otherwise, fearing that Indians, because of the disadvantage owing to their great undereducation, would lose their lone representative, Reverend CD Lalla, in the existing nominated Council (West Indies 1922, 24-5; Craig 1952, 31). The importation of indentured Indian labour ended only in 1917. Their fear was unwarranted, however, as since 1928 there were never less than two out of the seven elected members in the Legislative Council who were Indian, in 1946 four of the nine elected members were Indian, and in 1950 seven of the eighteen elected members were Indian (Craig 1952, 85-6).

National Congress advocated the introduction of communal representation, which the other two organisations (in addition to the Deputation of East Indians) opposed.

Major Wood agreed with "the weight of official opinion" that a "measure of representation, subject to adequate safeguards" was desirable.¹⁰ It is significant to note his concluding remarks concerning his recommendations:

It will be seen from the above that I have not adopted the system of the election of members by particular interests or any system of communal representation. We came to the conclusion that the objections to the first were insuperable on the ground of the difficulties of determining what the constituency would be and of drawing the line between bodies which should, or should not, be represented. ... As regards communal representation, apart from the objection that this arrangement would be opposed by the chief advocates of constitutional change, there would again be great difficulty in deciding what the constituencies were to be, and, moreover, it would accentuate and perpetuate the differences which, in order to produce a homogeneous community, it should be the object of statesmanship to remove. The East Indians are an important element in the community, and it would be a great misfortune if they were encouraged to stand aside from the main current of political life instead of sharing in it and assisting to guide its course. Finally, if a concession of this kind were granted to the East Indians, there would be no logical reason for withholding it from persons of French, Spanish or Chinese descent, a situation which would become impossible. By retaining the system of nomination by the Crown, it will always be possible to secure representatives on the Council of races or important interests not otherwise adequately represented by direct election. (West Indies 1922, 26-7)

The Trinidad and Tobago Order-in-Council reconstituting the Legislative Council in 1924 provided for an Unofficial membership increased from eleven to thirteen members, seven of whom were to be elected and six nominated. Concomitantly, the number of Official Council members was increased from ten to twelve, and the

⁹ Who delivered the Address of welcome to Major Wood upon his arrival in Trinidad on 23 January 1922. Major Wood stayed until 2 February and visited the island again on 13-4 February (West Indies 1922, 97).

Governor retained an original and casting vote in order to ensure an Official majority (Williams 1962a, 218; Spackman 1965, 284). A local franchise committee determined that the vote be extended to men over twenty-one years of age and women over thirty. In addition, the registering officer had to be satisfied that the voter could understand spoken English.¹¹ The property qualifications, though not exorbitant, did "ensure that the elected members would in the main be drawn from much the same classes as the nominated members" (Craig 1952, 68; Brereton 1981, 166; Spackman 1965, 284). As a result, the electorate was tiny. In 1925, a mere 21,794 voters were registered, only five seats were contested,¹² and 6,832 voted (Williams 1962a, 220). The next three elections were similarly low-keyed: in 1928 only three seats were contested; in 1933 four seats; and in 1938 only two. In 1933, the total electorate numbered around 11,000 with only 4,790 voting; while in 1938 only 2,601 of the 4,598 registered voters cast their ballots (Ryan 1972, 76; LaGuerre 1982, 21, 29, 69).¹³

In addition to the limited participation, there was another notable aspect of the emerging Trinidad and Tobago political system: candidates acted independently, without wider loyalties. Craig (1952, 66) notes, "As the divisions taken between 1929 and 1934 show, the nominated members tended to vote together more often than did the elected members, but there was no consistent alignment of nominated members on one side and elected members on the other." In addition, the elected members were not

¹⁰ This was also recommended for the Windward Islands of St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and Dominica. Barbados, British Guiana, and Jamaica already had representation, and Grenada's request already had been approved.

¹¹ French patois had been the *lingua franca* among the rural and lower classes, while immigrants from the Middle East, Portugal, India, China, and Africa were often uncomfortable speaking English.

¹² The two uncontested constituencies contained 6,162 registered voters.

¹³ Though not stated by LaGuerre, it is probable that his figures for the "total electorate" refer to the total in the contested constituencies only.

bound by party ties. Politics were dominated by independents. Community standing and a candidate's ability to command personal loyalty seemed to be the basis of elections.¹⁴ Sir Vidia Naipaul (1995a, 83-4) famously noted, "Nationalism was impossible in Trinidad. ... There were no parties, only individuals." Captain Arthur A. Cipriani of the Trinidad Workingmen's Association (TWA), in 1932 renamed the Trinidad Labour Party (TLP), was an exceptional figure¹⁵ who "for many years [had been] the only elected member who showed persistent opposition to the Government." The TLP's strongest showing in the Council, however, amounted to three loosely aligned members – Cipriani, Timothy Roodal, and Sarran Teelucksingh (Craig 1952, 67-91; Samaroo 1972, 205).

The next major constitutional advance occurred with the passing of the 1945 Constitution. The Trinidad and Tobago Amendment Order in Council establishing it followed the recommendations of the West India Royal Commission – composed of Walter Edward, Baron Moyne (Chairman); Sir Reginald Edward Stubbs; Dame Rachel Eleanor Crowdy; Sir Walter McLennan Citrine; Sir Percy Graham Mackinnon; Ralph Assheton; Mary Georgina Blacklock; Frank Leonard Engledow; Hubert Douglas

¹⁴ Eric Williams argued with regard to the 1950 elections that choices were made on the basis of "personal attainments, charitable donations, racial origin" (quoted in Samaroo 2000, 6). Naipaul's (1969) fictionalised account of the 1950 General Elections, in which his uncle, Simbhoonath Capildeo, was a candidate for Patrick Solomon's Caribbean Socialist Party (CSP), provides an excellent, even if satirical, insight into this type of local politicking. A brief account of the elections of 1933 and 1938 is provided by LaGuerre (1982, 19-30), which corroborates Naipaul's burlesque. Craig (1952, 67-91, 107-41) illustrates the absence of organised "sides" in proceedings of the Council.

¹⁵ Cipriani was a French Creole of Corsican descent who had served with the West India regiment in the Great War. He had been the leading political figure in the 1920s and 1930s as the champion of the "barefoot man" in the Legislative Council, where he held the Port of Spain seat from 1925 until his death in 1945. Cipriani also served continuously in the Port of Spain City Council from 1926 to 1941, eight of these years as Mayor (Craig 1952, 69-79). His impact on the development of Trinidadian nationalism is discussed in Lewis (1968, 203-7), Brereton (1981, 164-72), Oxaal (1982, 53-5), Ryan (1972, 28-43) and Williams (1962a, 222-3). In 1932 a political biography of Cipriani written by CLR James, now out of print, was published in England with the financial assistance of Learie Constantine (Buhle 1988, 41).

Henderson; and Morgan Jones – appointed in 1938 “to investigate social and economic conditions in Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Windward Islands, and matters connected therewith, and to make recommendations” (*West India* 1945, xiii). One of the major episodes prompting the Commission’s formation had been the Trinidad labour riots of 19 June to 6 July 1937, led by Tubal Uriah “Buzz” Butler, a Grenadian small church preacher and labour leader who had broken with the TLP in 1936 to found his “British Empire Workers and Citizens Home Rule Party,” commonly referred to as the Butler Party.¹⁶ Two policemen and twelve civilians were killed in the unrest; nine policemen and volunteers, and fifty civilians were wounded.¹⁷

In 1941, following the Report’s general constitutional recommendations,¹⁸ Trinidad and Tobago implemented the first stage of constitutional advance by changing the composition of the Legislative Council to include the Governor, three official members – the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney General, and the Financial Secretary – and fifteen unofficials, of whom nine were to be elected and six nominated. Under these new arrangements, the elected and non-elected elements were evenly balanced, numbering nine each, with the Governor holding his original and casting votes to tip the balance, and granted “reserve powers” to pass or veto legislation in accordance with the official (as opposed to unofficial) view of good government. Changes in the Executive Council

¹⁶ Brereton (1981, 180) and Singh (1987, 62-7) provide good accounts of the disturbances. The Forster Commission of 1937, too, had investigated the events in Trinidad with a narrower focus on industrial relations (Johnson 1987, 277).

¹⁷ While not large figures by international standards, it remains one of the most violent events in Trinidad and Tobago’s history.

¹⁸ The Report did not place priority on political solutions and saw the problems as social, economic, and, above all, agricultural (*West India* 1945, 422). Although the Report was released to the public in June 1945 a summary was published in February 1940, apparently as a confidential document in the Colonial Office (Colonial Office 1947, 1; Samaroo 1973, 13).

(still only with advisory powers), were phased in between 1941 and 1944, with its final membership composed of the Governor, the three official members, one nominated unofficial, and four elected members (Samaroo 1973, 10, 13; Brereton 1981, 193). Perhaps more important than the reconstituted Legislative and Executive Councils was the institution of universal adult suffrage, introduced after some controversy in 1945.¹⁹ As a result, 46 percent of the population were registered to vote in 1946, as opposed to 6.6 percent in 1938 (Craig 1952, 153).

As the constitutional framework advanced towards greater participation, the local society seemed to be organising itself into more numerous and diverse groups, multiplying since Major Wood's visit twenty-six years earlier. Evidence of this could be seen from the variety of often conflicting interests and organisations – representing working class, racial, professional, populist, socialist, and regional interests – who made their representations to the Franchise Committee of 1941-4 and would express later their dissatisfaction with the resulting 1945 Constitution (Samaroo 1973, 13-20).²⁰

The numerous groups reflected the significant social, cultural, and economic developments since the 1930s²¹ when, among other things, the lower classes seem to have discarded Cipriani's relatively organised and institutionally-focused politics:²²

¹⁹ Universal adult franchise without an English literacy test was pushed through by the Colonial Office in London, contravening the thirty-three member Franchise Committee's Majority Report which had been supported by the Legislative Council, the Executive Council, and the Governor. Many Indians had opposed the Majority Report's recommendation of an English literacy test, claiming that it would have disproportionately disenfranchised their group (Samaroo 1973, 20-35).

²⁰ Samaroo (1973) provides an excellent overview of the debates and positions surrounding the reforms.

²¹ Brereton (1981, 175-6, 223-7), Gomes (1974, 17-9, *passim*) and Lewis (1968, 222-3) give good accounts of the social and cultural developments of the period.

²² Cipriani and the TLP condemned the Butler riots, dissociated themselves from the strikers, and advised the protesters to adopt constitutional measures (Brereton 1981, 181). Gordon Lewis (1968,

Negro pride received a boost in 1935 in reaction against the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, and elsewhere with the triumphs of the American boxer Joe Louis (Craig-James 1987, 88);²³ middle-class activists in Port of Spain began to promote the folk arts – with their strong non-European, non-Christian roots – and to develop a “native” dance, music and literature;²⁴ and the art forms of calypso and steel band, and the establishment of Negro participation in West Indian cricket (most famously noted by CLR James [1994]) were significant developments in the popular culture of the lower classes. Among Indians, the nationalist movement in India stimulated a great deal of pride, while in 1945 the Centenary of Indian Arrival was celebrated in Skinner Park, San Fernando. Soon to follow was an efflorescence of Indian music, film, radio broadcasts, and Muslim and Hindu school building (Malik 1971, 9-10, 23; Ghany 1996, 11-46). Also of great importance in the period was the widespread prosperity and influx of new ideas, lifestyles and opportunities (legal and illegal) occasioned by the establishment of American military bases in Chaguaramas and Wallerfield as part of the Anglo-American Bases Agreement of 1941 (Brereton 1981, 191-2).²⁵

In this variegated, emerging environment in 1946, after the end of the War, Trinidad and Tobago held its first elections under universal adult suffrage. Of the 259,512 eligible voters, 53 percent turned out and all nine elective seats were contested: twenty

207) laments the decline of Cipriani's influence, describing the period 1938-56 as “the nadir of Trinidadian life.”

²³ Though the racial aspect of the 1937 disturbances is commonly acknowledged, Naipaul (1995b, 69-102) suggests that the riots were fundamentally racial, and provoked passions accordingly.

²⁴ Beryl McBurnie in dance and Albert Gomes, CLR James, Ralph deBoissière, and Alfred Mendes in literature were among the most notable.

²⁵ Indeed, future Hindu Indian leader Bhadase Maraj – shoeless country Indian turned millionaire by the age of 28 – had amassed his wealth through entrepreneurship in connection with the bases (*Master and servant* 1991, 18-21)

candidates represented parties, and twenty-two ran as independents.²⁶ Sixteen candidates were Negroes, thirteen East Indians, seven of European origin, and six of mixed descent (LaGuerre 1972, 197). This might be compared with the 1946 census figures in Table 2-3.

Table 2-3. Population of Trinidad and Tobago by Race, 1946

White		15,283	2.7%
Black		261,485	46.9%
East Indian		195,747	35.1%
Syrian		889	0.2%
Chinese		5,641	1.0%
Mixed or Coloured	<i>Total</i>	78,775	14.1%
	<i>Indian Creole</i>	8,406	1.5%
	<i>Chinese Creole</i>	3,673	0.7%
	<i>Other</i>	66,696	12.0%
Carib		26	0.0%
Not Stated		124	0.0%
TOTAL		557,970	100.0%

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (1949)

Eight of the winning candidates came from labour parties: three from the United Front (UF)²⁷, three from the Butler Party, and two from the Socialist Party of Trinidad and Tobago²⁸. One seat was won by an independent Hindu candidate, Ranjit Kumar (Brereton 1981, 195; Ryan 1972, 76-7).

Although party candidates predominated, they followed the established pattern and acted as independents. It should be noted that the parties that existed at this time did not have clearly defined programmes, aims, or enforced constitutions. They were often

²⁶ Ryan (1972, 146), however, declares that ninety independents ran in 1946.

²⁷ An urban-based coalition of Patrick Solomon's West Indian National Party, Albert Gomes's Federated Workers Trade Union, the Negro Welfare, Cultural and Social Association, and the Indian National Council. The UF were the only party formed specifically for the 1946 elections (Craig 1952, 154).

²⁸ A southern-based alliance between the Trades Union Council and the Oilfield Workers' Trade Union.

electoral alliances formed by independent-minded candidates who sought additional votes. In addition, in the 1946 elections none of the party leaders won their seats. Furthermore, the party groupings that were formed at the time of the elections did not endure (Craig 1952, 154-5). During their term in office, the four elected members of the Legislative Council chosen to sit on the Executive Council, despite being drawn from three different parties,²⁹ usually supported the Governor. In turn, they were opposed by their colleagues on the other side, who ephemerally grouped together to form the loose "Parliamentary Opposition Group," the first opposition bloc to have emerged in the Legislative Council. Inside and outside the Councils the original parties collapsed, and personalities formed new alliances, never seeming stronger than the lure of opportunities with which candidates might be presented (Brereton 1981, 196-7; Ryan 1972, 158; Craig 1952, 155-6).

It seems that the independence of members was highly valued in the political system of the time. In the by-election of July 1945 to fill the vacancy created by the death of Cipriani, for example, Louis Gilman Thomas assured his audience that "he would not be dictated to by any parties or cliques" (quoted in LaGuerre 1972, 189). Others believed that belonging to a party was to be "partisan" (LaGuerre 1972, 189). Even Roy Joseph, UF member in the 1946 Executive Council argued, "We are different beings and we cannot all unite on every point; we have to act as we see things and not as any individual would like us to see them" (quoted in Ryan 1972, 79).

²⁹ These were Albert Gomes and Roy Joseph from the UF, CC Abidh of the TUC, and Timothy Roodal of the Butler Party. Interestingly, they were a racially mixed group, being Portuguese, Negro, Syrian, and Indian respectively.

Notably, Albert Gomes,³⁰ echoing Major Wood's concerns of 1922, had declared in the *Sunday Guardian*, 7 July 1946,

We have not yet reached the stage where political impulse is guided by cognate considerations. As a people, we have not yet crystallised into that hard mould of objective opinion which guarantees stable development to a country. The pattern of our population in terms of loyalty to fundamental patriotic motifs is confused and chaotic. ... Unless we can produce in the next five years a fusion of the disparate and extraneous loyalties that now bedevil us, then the progress of Trinidad as a cohesive organism is a mere fantastic notion of the idealists in our midst. Our position, as revealed by the election, is not a happy one. ... Our political talent as displayed in the elections seems much too fluid and unstable to earn us the right to more ample political opportunities. We have not yet begun to think politically. ... The national groups in Trinidad will continue to hark back to former loyalties so long as Trinidad offers them no more than the day-to-day agony of eking out an existence. (quoted in Ryan 1972, 77-8)

However, it was acknowledged that Trinidad and Tobago's constitutional structure – in particular, the system of nomination of Executive members by the Governor, and the non-recognition of a leader of the Opposition – encouraged its weak party organisations. This led a number of members to interpret the Legislative Council as a generally unified body. For example, in 1925, in the first Council with an elected element, member of Legislative Council TM Kelshall twice rebutted the idea that there was any fundamental opposition between unofficial and official members, protesting, "The idea seems to be gaining ground that some of us on this side of the House are *de facto* in opposition. ... I am not a member of the Opposition; I am proud to be a member of the Government – on the Unofficial side" (quoted in Craig 1952, 67-8).

Dissenting voices, on the other hand, were easily outvoted. Even in the 1945 it was impossible for the elected members to form an effective majority in the Legislative

³⁰ Gomes was a popular politician well known for his support of local writers, the Spiritual Baptists, the steelband movement, calypsonians, and trade unions. In 1945 he won the Port of Spain seat

Council due to their limited numbers, the limited powers granted to elected members, and the veto powers given to the Governor.³¹ In 1947, in response to a motion by Roy Joseph, a twenty-five member constitutional committee was established to recommend further constitutional reform. They reported the following year, and recommended a much greater number of elected members in the Councils. In 1950 the Trinidad and Tobago (Constitution) Order-in-Council was passed. The new Legislative Council doubled the number of elective seats to eighteen and reduced the number of nominated unofficials to five,³² while the three *ex officio* members remained unchanged. The new Executive Council comprised five elected and only one nominated unofficial, in addition to the three Crown Officials and the Governor. Significantly, all five elected members in the Executive Council were granted limited Ministerial Responsibility. The Executive Council also had its role elevated from a purely advisory body to the "chief instrument of policy," in which the Governor only had a casting vote. In addition, an elected member would be chosen as leader whom the Governor would consult on the allocation of portfolios (Spackman 1965, 285; Brereton 1981, 196, 198; Ryan 1972, 79-85).³³

Alongside the increase in governmental responsibility, however, emerged an electoral contest more confused than in 1946. With eighteen elected seats instead of nine, it was

left vacant by Cipriani's death (Gomes 1974).

³¹ See Williams (1955c), Solomon (1981, 32), Ryan (1972, 84), Brereton (1981, 196). However, it must be noted that Barbados and Jamaica had developed national party-based politics under similar constitutional constraints.

³² The Secretary of State for the Colonies reduced the nominated element from six, as recommended by Reform Committee's Majority Report (Craig 1952, 159).

³³ Spackman (1965, 285-7) and Ryan (1972, 79-89) give good accounts of the Majority Report and the Minority Reports by Dr. Patrick Solomon, who called for greater responsibility, and Ranjit Kumar, who called for a balance between responsibility and the protection of minorities through the nomination system and proportional representation.

like throwing petrol onto a fire: 141 candidates contested the elections in September 1950 – 90 independents, 51 “with some kind of party affiliation” (Brereton 1981, 198). In these elections, Butler’s Party captured six seats, Independents six, the Caribbean Socialist Party (CSP) (led by Patrick Solomon, who lost his seat) two, the TLP two, and the Political Progress Group (PPG) (led by Gomes) two.³⁴

After the elections, two Independents – the soon to be prominent Bhadase Maraj and the charismatic APT James in Tobago, who had in fact contested as a member of both the Butler Party and the CSP (Craig 1952, 167) – announced that they would support Butler in the Legislative Council. But Butler’s reputation for unpredictability, demagoguery, and his earlier incarceration by the authorities³⁵ virtually guaranteed his debarment from the Executive Council. Despite commanding the support of the largest number of members, his party controlled only eight out of twenty-six seats, and neither he nor any of his supporters were called to the Executive Council (Oxaal 1982, 84; Ryan 1972, 88-9; Brereton 1981, 198; Spackman 1965, 287). The Independents Roy Joseph, Norman Tang, and Ajodasingh, PPG leader Albert Gomes, and CSP member Victor Bryan were instead made Ministers. Gomes led the Executive, holding the most prestigious post of Minister of Industry, Labour, and Commerce. Parties and allegiances continued to split and recombine, the most important combinations being the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) – formed in 1953 under the leadership of Bhadase Maraj, bringing together all seven Indian MLCs (Maraj, Ajodasingh, four of Butler’s MLCs,

³⁴ LaGuerre (1980) analyses the 1950 elections, noting that apart from constitutional issues candidates’ appeals were localised and that racial considerations were merely one consideration alongside ideology, leadership, organisation, financial resources, academic qualifications, and kin relations.

³⁵ Butler had been detained throughout the Second World War for fear of his strike activity in the critically important oil industry (Brereton 1981, 189).

and Simbhoonath Capildeo from the CSP) – and the Party of Political Progress Groups (POPPG), led by Albert Gomes, emerging from his PPG.

The diverse, immigrant, developing, and colonial society of Trinidad and Tobago was generally considered much behind Jamaica and Barbados, in particular, whose People's National Party (PNP) (founded in 1938) and Barbados Labour Party (founded in 1942), respectively, were widely respected in the West Indies and abroad for their national organisation and programmes (Ayearst 1960, 41, 89; Lewis 1968, 181-6, 234-48). As responsible government progressed in Trinidad and Tobago, there had been no comparable organisation ready to lead the country to self-government and independence.

CHAPTER 3

“PNM AGAINST THE REST”: THE COMING TO POWER OF ERIC WILLIAMS, 1954-62

In this chapter, we follow the entrance of Dr. Eric Eustace Williams (1911-1981) on the political stage of Trinidad and Tobago in 1954 through to the achievement of national independence in 1962 under the governance of the People's National Movement (PNM), which Williams led. The PNM, founded in 1956, was the first political party in the country's history to put up candidates for every available legislative seat. Williams fervently sought to prevail over the political tradition of independent candidates by introducing the concept of party discipline and programme, and to portray himself as a national, as opposed to sectional or racial, leader. The PNM's precarious victory in 1956 prompted the opposition groups to organise themselves more nationally, stimulating the PNM in turn to more vigorously establish itself as the pre-eminent political organisation in the country. By Independence on 31 August 1962, after a contentious six-year period of settling in, the PNM had won two general elections and was in firm control of government.

"I Am Going to Let Down My Bucket Right Here": Dr. Eric Williams, 1954-5

Dissatisfaction with 1950 Constitution led on 26 November 1954 to the passing of a motion by the Independent member of Legislative Council for Port of Spain East, Aubrey James, for the establishment of a Select Committee on Constitutional Reform. Gomes had rejected the original motion in April 1954 on the grounds that it would postpone the coming general elections, due after the scheduled dissolution of the Council in September 1955. The passing of James's motion led, on 15 April 1955, to the extension of the legislature and the setting of the election date to 26 July 1956 at the latest (Ghany 1996, 80-1; Spackman 1965, 287). The Butler Party and the PDP objected to the postponement of elections arguing that elections should be held occur before constitutional changes were introduced (Spackman 1965, 287-8). PDP leader Bhadase Maraj promptly resigned his Tunapuna seat, and won the resulting by-election on 13 June 1955 handsomely (Ghany 1996, 81). It was speculated that Gomes, in collusion with the Colonial Office, had intended to use the time granted by the postponement to rebuild his political machinery in order to prevent the possibility of a PDP victory in the 1955 elections, which seemed a likely occurrence at the time. There is evidence also that the Colonial Office did not want to have to negotiate with a new government in the final Federation talks which were due in February 1956, and that they feared that an Indian-led government would not be co-operative (Ryan 1972, 99-101; Ghany 1996, 82). This perception was justified on 12 December 1954 when four of the seven Indian members of the Legislative Council voted against a motion to accept the 1953 Federal scheme, while the three others (including the Executive Council member, Ajodasingh,

who was told that he would have to resign his portfolio if he voted against the plan) abstained¹ (Ayearst 1960, 234).

However, the postponement of the general elections had other vital, unintentional consequences, clearing the way at each stage for the political emergence – through a combination of accident and ambition – of Dr. Eric Williams, one of the island's leading intellectuals, who by then had a poor relationship with his employers. Born on 25 September 1911, the son of a Post Office official and the eldest of twelve children, Williams left Trinidad to take up the prestigious Island Scholarship in 1932. He received his Ph.D. in History from Oxford in 1938 (making a decisive break from the Island Scholarship habit of pursuing medicine or law), authored the path-breaking *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) and *The Negro in the Caribbean* (1945), lectured as Assistant Professor of Social and Political Science at Howard University from 1939 to 1948, and in 1944 was appointed to the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission, eventually holding third rank as Deputy Chairman of the Caribbean Research Council and Head of the Research Branch of the Secretariat (Williams 1969; Sutton 1981). In 1948, Williams had returned to Trinidad as the Commission's Deputy Chairman of the Caribbean Research Council. As head of research he directed conferences and special studies on trade statistics, industrial development, timbers, fisheries, housing, trade promotion, education, and small scale farming (Williams 1969, 105).

Once settled in Trinidad, Williams set about popularising his historical work with its unbending themes of West Indian nationalism and Negro progressivism. He had accepted the Presidency of the Caribbean Historical Society in 1948, initiated

¹ Two members of the Butler Party also voted against the motion.

publication of a *Caribbean Historical Review* (in print from 1949 to 1953), published a weekly series of forty articles in the *Trinidad Guardian* (in 1950), presented a series of lectures in Port of Spain and San Fernando contracted by the University College of the West Indies, was consulted by the Gomes government on problems of the sugar preference agreement and trade, and at his home in the elite residential district on Lady Chancellor Road in Port of Spain he held evening adult seminars attracting a number of persons who would become his most active supporters when he prepared to enter politics. One such group based in San Fernando, calling itself *Bachacs* (a ferocious species of ant in Trinidad), was later be instrumental in founding the PNM, and three of its members – Winston Mahabir, Gerard Montano, Donald Granado – became Ministers in the first PNM Government (Williams 1969, 106-11; Mahabir 1978, 17-9, Oxaal 1982, 101, 106; Ghany 1996, 69-70, 101, 106).

His most significant support, arguably, came from the Teachers Education and Cultural Association (TECA), a group of young teachers organised in the 1940s as an alternative to the official teachers' union. TECA members considered themselves more socially conscious and militant than their peers, held deep grievances against the dual (Church-State) system of education with its attendant racial and religious discrimination, and attempted to make a cultural contribution to their communities through the organisation of study groups, music festivals, and a book shop on Park Street in Port of Spain (Oxaal 1982, 103). In 1951, the TECA published Williams's *Education in the British West Indies*, a proposal for a West Indian University rejected six years earlier by the Caribbean Commission, in which TECA head, DeWilton Rogers, extolled Williams as "the philosopher of West Indian Nationalism" (Williams 1968, v). Impressively, the publication boasted a forward by noted American educationalist, John Dewey.

Williams's relationship with his employers had long been uneasy, and on 22 May 1954 he had been placed on one year's probation. The following month he wrote to the leader of the People's National Party (PNP) of Jamaica, Norman Manley (who had been a member of the British section of the Commission), "I am persecuted because of my writings; I think therefore that I should write some more" (Williams 1969, 86-92, 107, 113).

Williams organised an adult education series of public lectures, principally at the Trinidad Public Library in Port of Spain.² In September 1954, he gave five scrupulously detailed addresses on West Indian economics, literature, agriculture, and education. In November he gave another three (Williams 1969, 113-4). Despite their historical and technical detail, they aroused much passion. The highlight of that campaign grew out of the address of 5 November 1954, in which Williams quoted from Aristotle's *Politics* to defend his advocacy of state control of education: an issue which touched long-standing, highly sensitive questions about the power of the Catholic Church in British Trinidad, local white elitism, discrimination against aspiring blacks, and the racial and social implications of democratic advance.³ In the audience, Reverend Dom Basil Matthews, a tall, striking, black figure, Benedictine Monk, local Catholic educator of note, and Ph.D. holder himself from Fordham University, had taken issue with Dr. Williams's position during questioning. On 9 November, Dom Basil retorted with his own public lecture, equally learned but more philosophically attuned to Catholic doctrine. On 17 November Williams gave a rejoinder lecture, about which the *Trinidad Guardian* of 19 November 1954 reported,

² These talks seem to have been sponsored by Albert Gomes (Samaroo 2000, 6).

³ Oxaal (1982, 104-5) gives a wonderfully vivid account revealing the prejudices, fears, hopes and tumult surrounding the debates.

Hundreds were storming the gates of the Public Library long before Dr. Williams was due. ... When Dr. Williams arrived he had difficulty in getting through the hundreds who were pleading for admission to the already crowded Library. Some even suggested to Dr. Williams at the gates that he transfer the lecture to the Grand Stand at the Savannah or to Woodford Square. (quoted in Oxaal 1982, 104-5)

After the lecture, Williams invited voluntary organisations to meet with him to discuss the formation of a non-partisan Committee for Education in Citizenship (Oxaal 1982, 106). Emboldened by his success, on 24 November 1954 – six months after receiving his notice of probation – Williams wrote to the Caribbean Commission a bold but carefully-worded memorandum,⁴ in effect leaving them with only two options: promoting him to Secretary-General (the position which he felt he deserved) or firing him. Williams later wrote, "There was never at any time in my mind the slightest doubt as to which course the Commission would elect to adopt" (Williams 1969, 118-126). Two days later, the Legislative Council passed Aubrey James's motion to establish the Constitutional Reform Committee (Ghany 1996, 81), making the postponement of the next general elections a near certainty.⁵

In the first months of 1955, members of the TECA had quietly formed the Political Education Group (PEG), whose initial purpose had been chiefly to promote Dr. Williams's personal candidacy for public office (Oxaal 1982, 108).⁶ From January to May 1955, Williams intensified his public campaign by organising four concurrently

⁴ In which declared, "I have become the centre of a lively and encouraging movement for an enlightened democracy ... and an active programme of community education," specifically referring to the formation of the Committee on Education for Citizenship.

⁵ That year, Williams had written draft manifestos for three still-born political parties: the Independent Labour Party, the United People's Movement, and the National Party. Important ideas in these manifestos emerged almost word for word in the PNM's People's Charter in 1956 (Samaroo 2000, 9, 16-7).

⁶ For an excellent account of the specific work undertaken by the PEG, see Samaroo (2000, 14-6), who has used materials only recently made publicly available in the Eric Williams Collection at the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies, opened on 22 March 1998.

running public lecture series at the Public Library, giving occasional lectures to various interest groups, and writing a few pieces in the *Trinidad Guardian* (Williams 1969, 114-5). Meanwhile on 17 January 1955 had been established the thirty-five member Constitutional Reform Committee – comprising all members of the Legislative Council and eleven other eminent persons – and by 15 April 1955 the date of next elections were officially pushed ahead to 26 July 1956 (Ghany 1996, 81; Ayearst 1960, 86).

Six weeks later, on 26 May 1955, the Caribbean Commission had officially informed Williams that on 21 June his contract would not be renewed. On that day, after long discussions with his friends, Drs. Winston Mahabir, Elton C. Richardson, and Ibbit Mosaheb, he made a decision to form and lead a new political party. The party would gather support through Williams's public education programme, and it was decided that on the night of the day of his departure from the Commission – eight days after Bhadase Maraj would win the by-election in Tunapuna – he would give a public lecture in Woodford Square, Port of Spain, immediately opposite the Red House (Trinidad and Tobago's legislature), under the auspices of the Political Education Movement (PEM), the new organisation formed by the TECA (Williams 1969, 127, 131; Oxaal 1982, 108; Mahabir 1978, 18-9).

In that lecture, "My Relations with the Caribbean Commission, 1943-1955," Williams proclaimed,

I stand before you tonight ... the representative of a principle, a cause and a defeat. The principle is the principle of intellectual freedom. The cause is the cause of the West Indian people. The defeat is the defeat of the policy of appointing local men to high office. ...

What has happened to me could not have happened in Puerto Rico, Surinam, Jamaica, the Gold Coast, Nigeria, which have either achieved self government or will achieve it in the very near future. It can happen only in Trinidad and Tobago, politically the most backward area in the Caribbean,

except for those monuments of backwardness, Martinique and Guadeloupe. Whether it is Queen's Royal College or the Government Training College, the Police Band or the Post Office, our local men have either to be content with a bone as a substitute for meat or have to seek outside of Trinidad what they are not allowed to find in Trinidad. ...

... I was born here, and here I stay, with the people of Trinidad and Tobago, who educated me free of charge for nine years at Queen's Royal College and for five years at Oxford, who have made me whatever I am and who have been or might be at any time the victims of the very pressures which I have been fighting against for 12 years. ...

... I am going to let down my bucket where I am, now, right here with you in the British West Indies. (Williams 1981, 269-80)

Up to 8 October 1955 Williams delivered this lecture along with four others: *Economic Problems of Trinidad and Tobago*, *Constitution Reform in Trinidad and Tobago*, *The Historical Background of Race Relations in the Caribbean*, and *The Case for Party Politics in the Caribbean*, all published by the PEM, presenting the standards that would guide him through his entire political career: independence, industrial development, Westminster-type constitutionalism, the end of racial discrimination, and the need for disciplined, articulate, principled, national political parties. He consistently opposed his brand of politics to the "Trinidad bacchanal⁷ in the Legislative Council" allegedly practised by the Gomes government (Williams 1969, 141).

Oxaal rightly observes,

[Williams] had verve and flair; he had that all-important quality identified by Vidia Naipaul as the personal trait which Trinidadians most highly value – *style*. With his dignified bearing, sharp tongue, his ever-present trinity of props – hearing aid, dark glasses and cigaret drooping from his lips – "The Doc" was a sharply-etched, unique public personality. ... It is idle to speculate about the course of the island's development if Williams like so many other gifted West Indian intellectuals, had not returned home, but had pursued a career in Britain or the United States. It seems unlikely, however, that any other man then

⁷ The word is used quite regularly in Trinidad to describe the boisterous, argumentative, and slight manner in which matters are habitually conducted.

contemplating a political career in Trinidad would have had such an electric effect on the Creole masses or would have wielded so much power as an elected politician as did Williams. (Oxaal 1982, 112-3)

Williams delivered his lengthy and meticulously documented addresses to mass audiences⁸ in Woodford Square, Harris Promenade in San Fernando, Auzonville Savannah in Tunapuna, the Couva Car Park, Frisco Junction in Point Fortin, the Casbah Club in Fyzabad, The Arima Race Stand, St. Andrew's High School in Sangre Grande, the Scarborough Community Centre in Tobago, the Barataria AME Church, Holy Cross FS Church in Cantaro, the Princes Town Triangle, the Chaguanas Market, Sam's Club in Palo Seco, and the Gasparillo Community Centre (Williams 1955a; 1955b; 1955c; 1955d; 1955e). This degree of national political mobilisation had been unprecedented. Williams (1981, 108) had argued that the "most damning criticism of the present government is that it has taken no steps whatsoever to promote the political education of the people." On 19 July 1955 he famously avowed,

One recent critic of mine has said that the audience at my lectures is an 'uncultured mob'; I hope the doctors, lawyers, dentists, civil servants, housewives and workers in the audience have noted this. Only on Sunday another one grumbled that it is hardly possible that improvement will come from the quantity rather than the quality of the audiences I seem now to be courting. ... A third critic got very angry at the fact that I do not keep my discussions to university circles. He is quite wrong. I do. ... Now that I have resigned my position at Howard University in the USA, the only university in which I shall lecture in future is the University of Woodford Square and its several branches throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago. (Williams 1955b, 1)

That speech, on constitutional reform, was the climax of the campaign. At its conclusion, Williams invited the public to endorse his recommendations, transferring to the Chief Minister from the Governor and the Legislative Council power over

Ministers, and achieving a wholly elected Legislative Chamber through the introduction of a bicameral legislature with a wholly nominated Senate (Williams 1955b). Williams's petition had bypassed – intentionally, no doubt – the Constitutional Reform Committee which had sat from 17 January to 8 July 1955, and completed its exercise on 3 September (Ghany 1996, 75, 80). On 6 October 1955⁹ Williams presented the freshly arrived Governor Beetham, a fellow Oxonian, with six bound volumes containing 27,811 signatures (approximately one-tenth of the electorate) endorsing his constitutional reforms, along with a resolution and an open letter, supported by 19,595 signatures, to the Trinidad and Tobago delegation attending the West Indies Federal negotiations in February 1956 (Oxaal 1968, 114; Williams 1969, 136). There were critics, of course. Philip Rogers of the West Indian Department in the Colonial Office responded to Williams's lecture on constitutional reform sent to him by Governor Beetham,

I have read the whole of Dr. Williams's lecture, without pleasure. It represents almost a case for a psychiatrist. Dr. Williams is an able scholar, but unfortunately he has not grown, but become smaller with the years. Like Mr. Wallace, it surprises me that an audience can be collected for this kind of thing. (quoted in Ghany 1996, 80)

During the gathering of signatures Fortune had again smiled on Williams, as on 30 August 1955 the elections had been pushed forward once again, to 26 September 1956 at the latest (Ghany 1996, 81-4). On his two-month trip abroad, in addition to the work done for the ICFTU in Geneva and the International Labour Organisation in Brussels, Williams had travelled to Paris, London, and Jamaica to meet Aimé Césaire, George

⁸ In his August-September report to the Secretary of State, Governor Beetham had estimated an average peak attendance of 619 in the eight lectures since September (in Ghany 1996, 84).

⁹ Two days before he left for Geneva to attend an International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) Conference on Plantation Labour, where he squared off with Albert Gomes who had been an official delegate (Williams 1969, 141; Oxaal 1982, 114-5).

Padmore, CLR James, Arthur Lewis, Madame Pandit (the Indian High Commissioner in London), and Norman Manley. Williams had also addressed a meeting of MPs and others in the British House of Commons on Federation, and discussed the issue with the Governor of Jamaica, Sir Hugh Foot. Williams returned to Trinidad on 18 December and, resumed another lecture tour, speaking on Federation. During the series, he proclaimed on 3 January 1956 in the *Trinidad Guardian*,

Our policy in this matter has been simple, straight forward and honest. We cannot agree to inheriting the prejudices the prejudices and antagonisms of others, we will not be compromised by them, we decline, for the sake of winning an election, to participate in deals, arrangements or alliances with parties or individuals which we have every reason to believe, from the past history of Trinidad and Tobago, are as dangerous as shifting sands. (quoted in Malik 1971, 92)

Following through, on 15 January 1956 Williams oversaw the inauguration of his own political party, the People's National Movement (Williams 1956, 1969, 141-4).

"The PNM Against the Rest": The Campaign of 1956

The inaugural meeting passed the party's two founding documents. The first was the party's constitution, unusual not only because none had existed in Trinidad and Tobago before, but because of its stringent discipline, by Trinidad and Tobago standards (Williams 1962a, 242; PNM 1966, 1-15). Modelled largely on the PNP of Jamaica, it outlined a clear democratic structure, moving up hierarchically through Party Groups, Constituency Groups, the General Council of the Party, and ultimately the Annual Convention. Unusually, the Political Leader was not to conduct party business. Instead it would be directed by a Party Chairman. Also included in the manifesto were regulations on the control of party funds and membership contributions, and sanctions

against indiscipline – nomination to groups contrary to the Movement, the making of unendorsed public pronouncements, resignation from bodies without official notice, and voting against party directives. Affiliation to an organisation "inconsistent with the Movement," too, precluded membership in the PNM (PNM 1966, 1-4, 13-4).

"The People's Charter: A Statement of Fundamental Principles" was the party's second document. There the party proclaimed that it was "not another of the transitory and artificial combinations to which [voters] have grown accustomed in election years" and that it would "stand or fall by [its] programme." It called for immediate self-government in internal affairs, a British Caribbean Federation with Dominion Status in not more than five years, elimination of graft, corruption and dishonesty from public life, elimination of racial and other forms of discrimination and the promotion of interracial solidarity, and the "promotion of political education of the people." Its social principles were modern and progressive, following guidelines set by the major international organisations, and in the area of economics it advocated an industrialisation programme based on the ideas of Arthur Lewis. Interestingly, the party concluded by promising "no paradise, offer[ing] no millennium. It [made] no idiotic promise to [voters] that [they will] not have to work any more or that pennies will drop from heaven." They promised responsibility, fairness, "and a chance for you to hold your head high and for your children to hold theirs higher among the peoples of the world" (PNM 1966, 21-40).

On 24 January 1956 – exactly eight months before the elections – the PNM was publicly launched at a rally of "several thousands" in Woodford Square (Williams 1969, 148). Between 24 January and 14 June, according to his method, Williams held fifty-two different meetings all over the country, speaking on the Bandung Conference,

political trends in 1956, the voter and the vote, and the restatement of PNM's fundamental principles. To this he added lectures to various different trade unions and voluntary societies, even travelling to Barbados and Grenada. Williams expressed pride in his decision during these addresses never to lower his tone and lectured on "Europe, America and the Caribbean," "The Development of a Caribbean Nationalism," and "Caribbean Agriculture in Historical Perspective" to even the remotest and most isolated districts, to people with little or no schooling (Williams 1969, 149-50). On 14 July 1956, the *PNM Weekly* was launched with Williams (then unemployed) as editor. Its circulation rose from ten to twelve thousand, peaking at twenty thousand for the 9 August issue in which was included the PNM Manifesto, offering "first and foremost constitution reform, a bicameral legislature and the Cabinet system." The quality of the paper was generally very high, including a tribute in its 30 August issue by Barbadian novelist George Lamming – already widely acclaimed for his autobiography *In the Castle of My Skin* and *The Emigrants* – who wondered "what strange conversion, what magic, took place in Trinidad between 1950 and 1954" (Williams 1969, 152-61; PNM 1966, 43-52). In its third issue, they boldly challenged the assertion that

no party in Trinidad and Tobago can hope to win a majority. But as a mere matter of interest, why not? Marin has his in Puerto Rico, Nkrumah in the Gold Coast, Manley in Jamaica, Adams in Barbados, Bird in Antigua, Bradshaw in St. Kitts. Why not the PNM in Trinidad and Tobago? Only the voters can ensure that. And if the answer should be, as the parliamentary jargon goes, in the negative, so what? If not now, then in five years time; if not then, ten years time. The PNM has time on its side, youth on its side. It can wait. The PNM formally rejects the nettle. Its goal is the organisation of a proper party in Trinidad and Tobago; it will arrive at this goal by political education of the people. There is no immediate hurry. If Trinidad and Tobago have not perished in the past 6 years from the sacrifice of principle to expediency, they will never die. The PNM will not lose its way in the bush. (*PNM Weekly* 2 July 1956, 7)

Meanwhile, on 7 June 1956 the new constitution had been passed in the Legislative Council, to take effect after the next elections. In the new arrangements, a Chief

Minister was to head both the Legislative and Executive Councils and would be elected by the Legislative Council. The Financial Secretary would be replaced by a Minister of Finance drawn from the Legislative Council, thus reducing the number of Official members to two. The number of elected representatives was increased to twenty-four, while the nominated element remained at five. The Executive Council was to be composed of seven Ministers, elected by the Legislative Council, whose portfolios would be allocated by the Governor after consultation with the Chief Minister (Ayearst 1960, 86; Spackman 1965, 288). The Butler Party had submitted a Minority report which called for the removal of all the nominated members, while Roy Joseph, Minister of Education, added a critical rider proclaiming that the position of Chief Minister would be farcical without a proper party system. Governor Beetham, however, had been pleased with the result, particularly for its flexibility: if a majority party were elected, they could break through the constraints of the system; if no party captured a majority – and this was what was expected – the system was designed to function accordingly. Beetham had expressed fears that a constitution which assumed the existence of parties would result in “either the emergence of parties inherently racial in outlook or make-up, or the development of an innately unstable government and legislature” due to unlikelihood of the emergence of strong majorities (Spackman 1965, 288-9; Ryan 1972, 99).

Three weeks later, on 28-9 July 1956 the PNM held its first Annual Convention, the party’s highest authority. Present was Puerto Rico-based Professor Gordon Lewis (married to a Trinidadian) who had praised the party for refusing to underestimate the intelligence of the average West Indian (Williams 1969, 159). The day after the convention, the PNM presented its candidates for fourteen seats; on 14 August, eight more were selected. The party had even chartered a plane to Tobago on 17-9 August to

secure the candidacy of ANR Robinson there (Ghany 1996, 87-8). By the time of the elections the PNM had been the only party to contest all twenty-four seats, the first time a party had ever done so in Trinidad and Tobago's history.¹⁰ Although it shunned old politicians (with the exception of Patrick Solomon) the PNM were able to attract some respected persons. Party Chairman and candidate for Tunapuna was famed cricketer Learie Constantine. Dr. Winston Mahabir and Dr. Patrick Solomon were notable for the fact that, like Williams, they were also Island Scholars¹¹ (Oxaal 1982, 115). Assistant General Secretary and candidate for St. Joseph, Kamaluddin Mohammed was famous for being the country's leading promoter of Indian popular culture, particularly through his weekly radio programme "Indian Talent on Parade"¹² (Ghany 1996, 32-3). The party then embarked on its nationwide series of election meetings – 157 between 30 July to 23 September. During this time two major lectures were presented at Woodford Square: "Two Worlds in Conflict" on 14 August, and on 6 September, "An Evening with Hansard." The latter speech was an attack on the antics of the Legislative Council, made all the more hilarious by its verbatim quotes (Williams 1969, 161).

The PNM's organisation and focus profoundly affected the normally haphazard political scene.¹³ For one, the PNM had been considered by many to be a "Negro" party,

¹⁰ If one were to include loose alliance partners, one can argue that the Butler Party had contested all seats in 1950 (Craig 1952, 167). But Solomon (1981, 130), for example, whose CSP contested fourteen of the eighteen seats in 1950, rejects this formula. APT James had campaigned as a candidate for both the CSP and the Butler Party. In any case, it is notable that up to the time of writing the PNM has remained the only party in Trinidad and Tobago to consistently contest every seat in every election.

¹¹ The fact that the two were medical doctors, however, highlighted Williams's distinction even among Island Scholars

¹² Started in 1947, this programme had been of great significance as it was the first Indian radio broadcast in Trinidad and Tobago, and Mohammed steadfastly had used it to promote Hindu-Muslim unity.

¹³ Ryan (1972, 128-62) describes the election campaigns of the other parties as well.

Trinidad and Tobago's first.¹⁴ The PNM, or perhaps more precisely, Dr. Eric Williams, magnetically pulled the respectable brown middle classes – notoriously fearful of colour contamination as they aimed ever upwards¹⁵ – and the religiously ecstatic, small Church oriented black lower classes (Oxaal 1982, 100-1; Farquhar 1988, 28; Naipaul 1995b, 11-41; Gomes 1974, 173-7). Not unnaturally, this achievement provoked a deep response on both sides, arousing the fear of the Indians and the whites, most notably, while it stimulated Negro enthusiasm. In this environment, accusations of racism flew all around.¹⁶

The PNM's aggressive campaign for leadership of all the groups of the two islands, while proclaiming in its manifesto its advocacy of secular education, its lack of prejudice towards illegitimacy and birth control, and racial integration in social relations (PNM 1966, 17-52) provoked further reactions, again most notably from the Indians¹⁷ and the hierarchy of the powerful Roman Catholic Church.¹⁸

Interestingly, however, the Indians and whites who together made up 37.8 percent of the population in 1946 (or Hindus and Catholics, who together totalled over 57 percent

¹⁴ Before the PNM's existence, for example, Craig (1952, 167-8) wrote, "The Indian community in Trinidad appears to be, at the time of writing, the most united political force in the colony. ... Nationalist feeling among the coloured population is of more recent origin, lacking the intensity of Indian nationalist sentiment, and the racial unity of the negro has not yet found equally effective expression in political form." Notably, "The Rise of Creole Nationalism," is the major theme of Oxaal's (1982) seminal work, providing his book's subtitle.

¹⁵ Writing in 1953, Braithwaite (1975, 41-68) provides an excellent ethnography of this class.

¹⁶ Most scholars and participants, including Malik (1971, 93-4), Brassington ([1975], 59-60) and PNM members Mohammed (1988), Mahabir (1978, 30-6) have agreed that racialism, sometimes aggressive, had been noticeably heightened in the campaign of 1956. Ryan (1972, 128-62), Gomes (1974, 159-60, 173-5, 237), Farquhar (1988, 28) further contend that communalism was the most important aspect of the elections. Gomes (1974, 161-75), Solomon (1981, 75), LaGuerre (1982); Bahadoorsingh (1968); Oxaal (1982, 84-5) give accounts of the influence of race in politics before 1956.

¹⁷ Malik (1971, 51-68, 161) provides an excellent summary of Indian cultural and political attitudes, which included fear of miscegenation, and simple opposition to the PNM on parochial, racial grounds.

of the population, see Table 3-1) did not make common cause against the PNM, seemingly content to remain as separate interests.¹⁹

Table 3-1. Population of Trinidad and Tobago by Religion, 1946

Roman Catholic	192,500	34.5%
Anglican	135,312	24.3%
Hindu	126,345	22.6%
Moslem	32,615	5.8%
Presbyterian	20,074	3.6%
All Others	51,124	9.2%
All Religions	557,970	100.0%

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (1949)

The Hindus had "their own" political party, the PDP, whose Political Leader, Bhadase Maraj, was also the President of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS) (formed in 1952). The Catholic Church chose not to specifically align themselves with any candidates, although political parties (including the POPPG) and independents (including Minister of Education Roy Joseph) publicly sided with them (Williams 1969, 151; Ryan 1972, 129-132, 148; Malik 1971, 88; *TG* 8 July 1956, 8).

Interestingly, however, Henry-Hudson Phillips, a leading member of Gomes's POPPG, published an open letter in the *Trinidad Guardian* (3 July 1956, 1) in which he called for "an honourable coalition between the POPPG and the PNM." This was to prevent the tragic "emergence of a weak ministry" which might jeopardise the success of Federation and lose the confidence of the foreign investors who had already expressed interest in the Colony.²⁰ Williams immediately rejected the call, with characteristic

¹⁸ who opposed the PNM on theological grounds, but were also fearful of a militant Negro ascension to power, no doubt. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church were mainly Irish expatriates at the time; only in 1968 did a Trinidad-born Archbishop come to lead the Archdiocese.

¹⁹ Gomes (1974, 182) had frankly noted, "The less hermetic, more extrovert Negro was cherished as such by [the local whites] as the devil they knew."

²⁰ The instability following Cheddi Jagan and the People's Progressive Party's capture of government in British Guyana in 1953 probably provided a subtext to this warning.

sarcasm, and declared that in the elections it will be "PNM against the Rest" (TG 4 July 1956, 2). The POPPG had declared that Hudson-Phillips's letter had been forwarded without the party's knowledge and that the party could not ally with the PNM since they "differ[ed] diametrically on basic principles" (TG 4 July 1956, 1-2). The following week, Hudson-Phillips tendered a public apology (TG 11 July 1956, 9).

Also notable were the charges of totalitarianism commonly levied against the PNM, because of their zeal for party discipline and nationalism.²¹ The Catholic Church, with philosophical sophistication (compromised at times by its excitability), articulated this critique through at least eight "Official Statements to the Catholic Voter," numerous editorials in its weekly *Catholic News*, articles in the *Trinidad Guardian* (1 July 1956; 8 July 1956; 2 September 1956; 18 September 1956), proclamations at religious observances, and even on the hustings itself (Ryan 1972, 149-55, 235; Williams 1969, 163; Ghany 1996, 86-7). It was their argument that party directives, in general, opposed the exercise of personal responsibility, which was the duty of every Catholic. Archbishop Finbar Ryan urged Catholics, "Vote for a candidate, for a man or woman – and not a party. The candidate's race, colour, religion, social status or party membership must not be considered the reason for giving him a vote. Each voter is bound to vote for the candidate whom, all things considered, he or she believes, in the sight of God, is most likely to serve the interests of the country and its people" (TG 2 September 1956, 14).

²¹ Famously, on the eve of the general elections, the *Sunday Guardian* (23 September 1956, 22) published a centre spread with large head shots, side by side, of Eric Williams and Adolf Hitler, under the headline, "Heil Williams?" On the same page ran another headline, "PNM Constitution Denies God: Party Policy Urges Ultra-Nationalism." The PNM organised a rally that evening denouncing the piece (Williams 1969, 163)

Not only would the Catholics and Hindus remain apart, so would the five socialist, labour, and Marxist groups – the West Indian Independence Party, the Butler Party, the Caribbean National Labour Party, the Caribbean People's Democratic Party, and the TLP alliance with the National Democratic Party (NDP) – contesting on left-wing platforms (Ryan 1972, 132-8; 1988, 550). And added to the eight parties were the thirty-nine independents (thirteen for every eight seats) who offered their candidacy.²²

Not surprisingly in this context, the belief persisted that no party would be able win a majority of seats. The *Trinidad Guardian* (8 July 1956, 9) also wondered whether parties could exercise effective control over their politicians. Independent candidate for St. George West, Abraham Sinanan, argued that party politics could not work in the absence of a fully elected chamber and responsible government (*TG* 2 September 1956, 1).

The *Trinidad Guardian* (15 July 1956, 9), in an article headlined "COALITION!", noted that with the exception of the PNM, all the parties were predisposed, with some conditions and reservations, to forming a coalition government. Weaker parties were actively seeking alliances (*TG* 22 July 1956, 10). Albert Gomes, too, (*TG* 1 September 1956, 1) in a triumphant "return" to Woodford Square²³ predicted that no single party would be able to form the government. He expected in 1956 a coalition government by "the cream of the crop" since "people saw the need for men of experience, men who passed through the mill to carry the country forward." Deprecating the PNM, he added,

²² The number of independents declined drastically from the ninety that contested in 1950. The *Trinidad Guardian* (30 August 1987, Independence Supplement, 4) argued that the doubling of deposits from \$120 to \$250 had much to do with this reduction.

²³ Free speech in Woodford Square, the article reported, had been one of his motions in the City Council, and on one spectacular occasion seven policemen had to drag him out of the Council Chamber

"The new nine day wonder was the cultured man, the arty man and the intellectual. This was the new fad."²⁴ The *Trinidad Guardian's* Political Observer forecast a coalition of five parties controlling government, led by the PDP, in an eleven-seat coalition against the PNM (2 September 1956, 9). The *Trinidad Guardian* (16 September 1956, 9) also reported that the Butler Party candidate for Pointe-à-Pierre in south Trinidad had assessed that "there was definitely no chance of any one party being able to form the government as a result of this election" but there could be some hope of PNM and the Butler Party forming a coalition "to get rid of the greater enemy."

Norman Manley, too, Chief Minister of Jamaica since 1955, and leader of the West Indian Federal Labour Party (WIFLP),²⁵ had expressed his reservations about the state of politics in Trinidad and Tobago during his visit to observe the elections.²⁶ The *Trinidad Guardian* reported,

The Chief Minister pointed out that it was 'quite impossible' to make a decision on which local party will join the Federal Party, in advance of the local general election, as there were several parties all claiming to be Socialist. He remarked that the multiplicity of parties was making a joke of party politics. He explained that in waiting for the political situation in Trinidad to be settled, he was being careful not to do anything that would savour of political interference at this time. (*TG* 4 September 1956, 1)

Governor Beetham, as well, maintained his scepticism and on 15 September 1956, nine days before the elections, he had sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the

on account of his protests. On another occasion, he and others were charged in court for defying orders not to speak in the Square, and won the case in the Privy Council.

²⁴ Cf. Naipaul's (1995a, 48-56) brilliant analysis of Trinidadians' characteristic alertness to new fads as central to its own brand of "modernity."

²⁵ Founded on 14 June 1956, following the February 1956 Federal Conference in London (Ayearst 1960, 223)

²⁶ At that point, Trinidad and Tobago had been the only territory in the West Indies which was not represented in the WIFLP.

Commander-in-Chief for America and the West Indies, and the Officer in Charge of Troops in Jamaica, a Top Secret Inward Telegram that read, in part,

1. So far election campaign has been accompanied by surprisingly little lawlessness. I mistrust this unnatural calm and believe it may well be due to complete confidence in victory of supporters of the Williams party, the mass of whom are negroes.
2. Present indications are that this party will not (repeat not) achieve anything like overwhelming victory expected and practicability of results to this volatile section of population at the end of long and exciting day may lead to spontaneous disorders particularly in Port-of-Spain. (quoted in Ghany 1996, 89)

Accordingly a request was made for a visit by one of HM ships at Pointe-à-Pierre on 22 September, and at Port of Spain on the 23rd, to leave on 25 September "if all is quiet" (Ghany 1996, 89-90). There was no need for the vessel, however, as the elections occurred without serious incident.²⁷

The elections of 24 September 1956 returned thirteen seats to the PNM, five to the PDP, and two each to the Butler Party, TLP-NDP, and Independent candidates (see Table 3-2). The turnout rate had been 80 percent, the highest ever seen in the Colony up to that time (Malik 1971, 121).²⁸

²⁷ Williams (1969, 163) boasted that on the eve of the election, after the large Woodford Square meeting called to denounce the equation of Hitler with himself in that day's *Sunday Guardian*, he was astonished at the large crowd's swift and unquestioning compliance with his advice to "go home right away and stay off the streets on election day after voting."

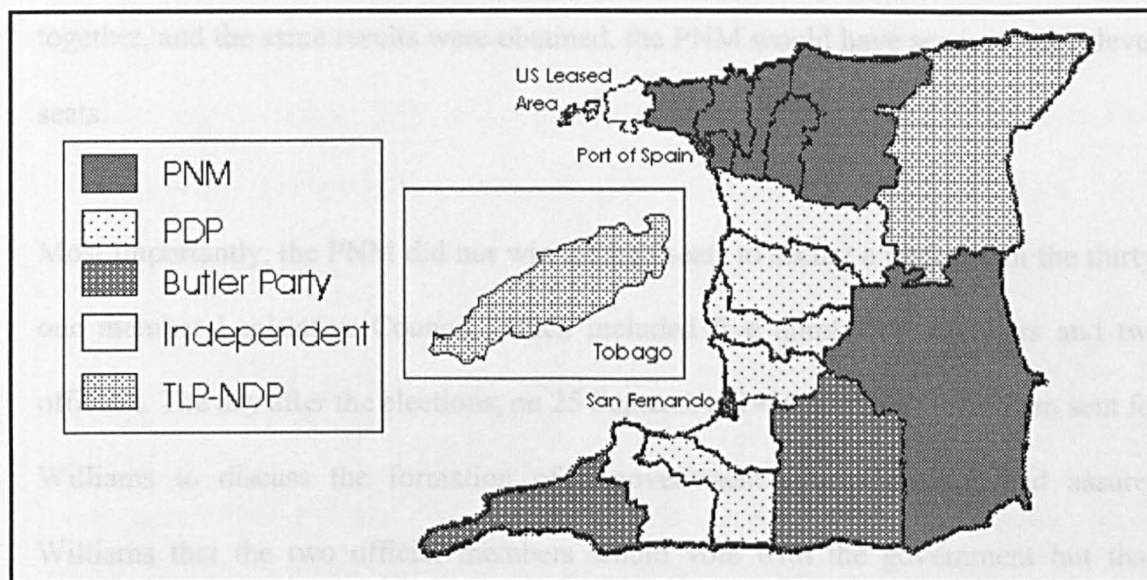
²⁸ In 1946 and 1950, the rates were 52.9 percent and 70 percent respectively (Malik 1971, 121).

Table 3-2. Election Statistics, 1956 General Elections

	Number of Candidates	Number of Seats Won	Total Number of Votes	% of Votes
People's National Movement	24	13	105,153	39.7%
Butler Party	20	2	31,071	11.7%
People's Democratic Party	14	5	55,148	20.8%
Trinidad Labour Party-National Democratic Party	12	2	13,692	5.2%
Party of Political Progress Groups	9	0	14,019	5.3%
Caribbean National Labour Party	8	0	3,864	1.5%
West Indian Independence Party	1	0	446	0.2%
Caribbean People's Democratic Party	1	0	627	0.2%
Independents	39	2	40,523	15.3%
TOTALS	129	24	264,543	100.0%

Source: Ryan (1988, 505-550)

The PNM had captured the seats along the conurbation in the north spilling out from Port of Spain, the two seats in the urban area of San Fernando in the south, and perhaps surprisingly, the rural seat of Nariva/Mayaro in the extreme south-east. (Figure 3-1). The party had narrowly lost three additional seats (St. Andrew/St. David in the north-east and Tobago to the TLP-NDP, and Ortoire/Moruga in the south to the Butler Party) to parties obtaining less than 50 percent of the votes cast. Winning the majority of elected seats was not the only aspect of their victory as its candidates defeated three of the five Ministers of the 1950 Government: Norman Tang, Roy Joseph, and, most surprisingly, Albert Gomes. The PNM fully secured the capital city, unlike the ruling parties in Jamaica, Barbados, or Guyana, for example (William 1969, 165).

Figure 3-1. Distribution of Constituencies by Party, 1956 General Elections

Created by the author from the *Trinidad Guardian* (2 September 1956, 9) and Ryan (1988, 505-9)

However, the PNM didn't completely dominate. The party polled less than 40 percent of the ballot and five of their victories were won by less than 1,500 votes (Table 3-3).

Table 3-3. Marginal Victories of the PNM, 1956 General Elections

CONSTITUENCY	MARGIN OF VICTORY	DEFEATED PARTY/CANDIDATE
St. Joseph	109	Chanka Maharaj (Ind.)
Tunapuna	179	PDP
Nariva/Mayaro	626	PDP
San Fernando West	988	Roy Joseph (Ind.)
San Fernando East	1348	Butler Party
Port of Spain - North	1458	Albert Gomes (POPPG)

Source: Ryan (1988, 505-509)

One other seat (St. George East, in the north) was secured with a minority of 40.7 percent. The party performed most poorly in the three constituencies in the oil belt of St. Patrick county (the southern peninsula) securing only 13.8 percent of the total votes cast. In the eastern counties of Nariva/Mayaro and St. Andrew/St. David, too, the PNM

only polled 24.2 percent.²⁹ Indeed, if all of the anti-PNM candidates had grouped together, and the same results were obtained, the PNM would have secured only eleven seats.

Most importantly, the PNM did not win enough seats to secure a majority in the thirty-one member Legislative Council, which included five nominated members and two officials. The day after the elections, on 25 September 1956, Governor Beetham sent for Williams to discuss the formation of a government. The Governor had assured Williams that the two official members would vote with the government but that, according to the terms of the 1956 Constitution, he could not accede to Williams's request that two nominated members be appointed by the PNM and that the other three be appointed after consultation with him. After one month of negotiations, the Secretary of State for the Colonies directed the Governor to grant the PNM their request, indicating that the emergence of a majority party must modify the earlier principles of nomination as had occurred "in one or two other colonial territories with advanced constitutions" (Ghany 1996, 99-100). In addition to securing the nominated members, Williams had won the right to advise rather than recommend to the Governor the portfolios allocated to his Ministers (Spackman 1965, 290-1). On 26 October 1956 the Legislative Council sat for the first time under the new arrangements. To add to their victory, Williams and his seven ministers were elected with nineteen votes each, four more than the number of PNM members of Council, with nine abstentions and two

²⁹ Interestingly, this provides a counterpoint for scholars such as Ryan (1972) and Bahadoorsingh (1968) who argue that the main contest had been between Negroes, represented by the PNM, and Indians, represented by the PDP. The electoral data show that the PNM polled a respectable 39.8 percent of the votes in the three Caroni constituencies of central Trinidad, the sugar-belt and Hindu heartland. Indeed, it was in St. Patrick Central and St. Patrick East where the PNM seemed to have special difficulty securing candidates, declaring them sometime after 14 August (Ghany 1996, 87-8). According to the 1946 Census, the proportion of Indians was 68.2 percent in Caroni, 42.4 percent in St. Patrick, and 50.4 percent in the Eastern Counties (Central Bureau of Statistics 1949).

blank ballots (Ghany 1996, 95-6). Certainly, this had been no slight victory for the PNM, and the party celebrated with its supporters in Woodford Square immediately after the sitting (Williams 1969, 167). The first hurdle was cleared with great success as the PNM became the first party government in Trinidad and Tobago.

"Opposition for So": The Rise of the DLP, 1957-60

Having secured leadership of government, the PNM faced the task of implementing its programme, and staying in power. Williams (1969, 168) later remarked about this period, "the first five years were years of hard work." His deputy, Patrick Solomon (1981, 50) seems to have agreed.³⁰

The first and foremost goal of the 1956-61 term, as expressed by Williams (1969, 168), was full internal self-government and the elimination of colonialism. This was achieved through constitutional reform in 1959 and 1961. Other major tasks included presenting its first Five Year Development Plan in 1957, increasing development expenditure in Tobago from 1957, reorganisation of the public service in 1959, reforming the education system in 1959-60, reorganising town and country planning in 1960, taking over the telephone company in 1958-60 and public transportation in 1961, and renegotiating from 1957-60 the 1941 Anglo-American Bases Agreement in order to reclaim Chaguaramas, chosen as the site for West Indian Federal Capital.

³⁰ First hand accounts of this term from the ex-Cabinet members (and Island Scholars) Williams (1969, 168-288), Mahabir (1978, 43-220), and Solomon (1981, 147-202), from opposition party members Gomes (1974, 191-223) and Brassington ([1975], 1-124), a retold account from Cabinet Minister Mohammed (Ghany 1996, 95-160), and evaluations from Ryan (1972, 171-336) and Malik (1971, 128-141), allow an exceptionally full and many-sided view of the period.

Some difficulties in the implementation of the PNM programme resulted from problems in the party itself, such as Williams's dissatisfaction with Solomon as Minister of Education (Mahabir 1978, 45; Solomon 1981, 150-7), or the party's unfamiliarity with the Council, in the first year especially, which had made them vulnerable to many attacks from the opposition, most of whom were seasoned Council members (Mahabir 1978, 45-6, 93-8; Solomon 1981, 150-7; Ryan 1972, 174). Perhaps the most important challenge was political rather than governmental. This came from the formation of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP), with the support of nine opposition members.³¹ The formation of the party was motivated by a visit on 17 May 1957 from Jamaica of Sir Alexander Bustamante, leader of the opposition Jamaica Labour Party, who was looking to form a federal political party to counter the WIFLP, led by his cousin, Norman Manley.³² On 23 May 1957, the Trinidad unit of the federal DLP was launched, with the PDP, TLP and POPPG declaring affiliation. Two months later, on 18 July 1957, the parties dissolved themselves to form the DLP of Trinidad and Tobago (Malik 1971, 98-9). The development – widely interpreted as a maturation of the political system – was welcomed by many, including the PNM Government who had provided the DLP with office space, salary for a secretary, and recognised the Leader of the Opposition in its Estimates and salary scales (Solomon 1981, 174-5; Brassington [1975], 32, 46).³³

³¹ T.U.B. Butler (St. Patrick West) and AC Alexis (St. Patrick Central) were the two that did not join (Solomon 1981, 124). Alexis later joined the PNM, and Butler started to give Williams vocal support, expressed on more than a few occasions with an anti-Indian sentiment (Ryan 1972, 182, Malik 1971, 100).

³² The West Indian Federal Constitution had come into effect on 31 July 1957 by an Act of the British Parliament, following up the original Order in Council passed on 2 August 1956 (Ayearst 1960, 237).

³³ The existence of the PNM seems to have consolidated the opposition. Even in the 1956 elections, the average number of contestants per seat declined from eight per seat in 1950 to five in 1956, and the ratio of independents to party candidates was thirty-nine to ninety in 1956, as opposed to ninety independents to fifty-one party candidates in 1950. At least seventy-one candidates lost their deposits in 1956.

Although the DLP's deep flaw – its opportunistic basis of alliance – seemed quite apparent from the start, the party offered itself as a more truly “democratic” (seeming to mean less centralised, personality-centred, and rule-bound³⁴ than the PNM), free enterprise oriented, and multi-racial alternative to the PNM³⁵ (Malik 1971, 98-9; Brassington [1975], 52-6). But with some exceptions,³⁶ its politics in the Legislative Council on the whole seemed to be negative: obstructionism, walkouts, and time-consuming allegations of corruption.³⁷ In addition, their performance was peppered with internal party squabbling – sometimes quite ugly – played out in the Council (Williams 1969, 214-5, 252-9; Malik 1971, 128-159; Mahabir 1978, 93-98, Ryan 1972, 174-9, 183).

Significantly, the DLP opposed the PNM's insistence on the reclamation of Chaguaramas from the Americans in order to implement the Standing Federal Committee's recommendation on 17 May 1957 that Chaguaramas be made the site of the West Indian Federal Capital.³⁸ This would require the renegotiation of the 1941 Anglo-American Bases Agreement, which had granted the United States a ninety-nine

³⁴ The DLP had issued no special policy pronouncements at their inaugural Conference (Malik 1971, 98).

³⁵ More than a few persons were of the view that the PNM stimulated Negro chauvinism. Stephen Maharaj, from the Butler Party, had described regular racial harassment of opposition members by government supporters in the public areas of the Legislative Council after the PNM victory (quoted in Malik 1971, 96).

³⁶ Brassington ([1975], 46-56), Malik (1971, 129, 134) and Ryan (1972, 176-9) provide examples of the party's productive interventions in the Council in the matters of public utility management, constitutional provision of minority safeguards, financial and administrative impropriety, and the threatening, intolerant attitudes sometimes expressed by Williams.

³⁷ The most important early attempts to destabilise the PNM Government included the “Car Loans” crisis started on 31 May 1957 by DLP member Ashford Sinanan who had accused Cabinet members Patrick Solomon and Donald Granado of financial impropriety, leading to an embarrassing, dishonourable and extended court action only resolved in 1961, in the PNM's favour. CLR James in an early 1958 speech (*PNM Weekly* 19 May 1958, 1) dismissed the DLP, noting that the hostility that the industrialists and commercialists had shown to the national development prevented the emergence of a true right-wing, conservative party.

³⁸ Williams (1969, 204-245) provides an excellent, though perhaps biased, overview of the issue and its developments. Sir John Mordecai (1968, 107-23), former Deputy Governor-General of the Federation of the West Indies, also gives an inside account of the Chaguaramas affair.

year lease on the site. On 7 August 1957, Williams had introduced the issue in the Legislative Council, to DLP opposition.

Williams, however, had embarked on a crusade over Chaguaramas, passing a motion at the PNM Annual Convention on 29 September 1957, soliciting support from Canada, Indian Ceylon, and Pakistan in July/August 1958, writing articles in the new PNM organ *The Nation* (under the editorship of CLR James), and conducting a series of public lectures, the most famous being "From Slavery to Chaguaramas" delivered in Arima on 17 June 1959 (Williams 1969, 213-25; Ghany 1996, 114). The UK and the USA were not the only targets of Williams's campaign. He attacked the West Indian Federal Government as well, as the Federal Prime Minister, Sir Grantley Adams, had accepted public assurances made by the American and British Governments and announced in the House of Representative on 16 June 1958 that the West Indies would be prepared to review the situation in "say ten years time" (Williams 1969, 209).

In the meanwhile, the DLP introduced two separate motions of no confidence, partly over the Chaguaramas issue, the first on 9 September 1957, and the second on 21 February 1958 (Williams 1969, 214-5; Ryan 1972, 176-9). The DLP were able to deliver its heaviest blow to the PNM on 25 March 1958 in the West Indian Federal Parliament elections. Trinidad and Tobago had been divided into ten seats, and the DLP won six.³⁹ This was the first real test of the PNM's electoral strength after the 1956 elections,⁴⁰ and the first ever for the DLP. The PNM campaigned on its intellectualism

³⁹ The PNM won the Tobago seat, leaving it with only three seats in Trinidad. The PNM were affiliated to the WIFLP, who narrowly beat the federal DLP by twenty-four to twenty, with the remaining seat going to the Barbados National Party. In Jamaica, the WIFLP were also defeated by the DLP eleven to six (Ayearst 1960, 214-5).

⁴⁰ It should be noted that Municipal elections were held annually in Port of Spain (five seats), San Fernando (four seats), and Arima (two seats) (Williams 1969, 274-6).

and launched some savagely funny attacks on the DLP.⁴¹ The DLP however put up well-known candidates for election: three candidates defeated in the 1956 elections (Albert Gomes, Roy Joseph, and Surajpat Mathura), two Trinidad and Tobago members of the Legislative Council (Ashford Sinanan and Victor Bryan), and one newcomer, Mohammed Shah. The PNM were greatly disappointed, as they had expected that the 1956 elections had done away with the "old world" politicians (Brassington [1975], 16, 20; Ghany 1996, 111-2). To add to the indignity, the West Indian Federal Governor-General, Lord Hailes, had overruled one of the PNM Government's two recommendations for the Senate, in order to bring balance to what would have been a disproportionately WIFLP-dominated Senate in the Federal Parliament⁴² (Ghany 1996, 106-111).

The DLP's electoral success continued with the two by-elections in Point-à-Pierre and St. Andrew/St. David to replace Sinanan and Bryan. On 16 February 1959, almost one year after the Federal elections, the DLP added to its victories by winning control of five of the seven County Councils.⁴³ In the Municipal Elections the PNM continued to prevail, but faced some notable setbacks: in the elections of 1 and 3 November 1956, Louis Philip Rostant, a French Creole, beat the PNM candidate in Port of Spain North and went on to become mayor that year. In the 1959 Municipal Elections a DLP candidate, (Alphonso Hadeed, of Middle Eastern descent) defeated the PNM candidate

⁴¹ For example see the *PNM Weekly* (3 March 1958, 2, 4).

⁴² One of the Jamaican PNP Government's two recommendations was also overruled.

⁴³ The PNM, however, secured 140,275 votes and thirty-four seats, while the DLP captured 121,435 votes and thirty-three seats. The Butler Party had captured two seats, and three went to Independents. The turnout for these elections had been lower than in 1956: for the 1958 Federal elections 73.6 percent of the electorate voted, while 55.8 percent did so in the 1959 County Council elections.

again in the Port of Spain North constituency (Brassington [1975], 26-32; Malik 1971, 121; Williams 1969, 276).⁴⁴

Shifting the DLP-PNM balance further, the Colonial Office seemed to show uncommon support for the DLP after the Federal elections.⁴⁵ FE Brassington, Honorary Secretary of the DLP, 1957-60, noted,

From the very first flush of DLP poll successes the Colonial Office had recognised the integral part which our Party had to play in [Trinidad and Tobago]. ... Colonial Office officials present for the ... inauguration of the Federation in [April] 1958, made it a point to seek out DLP politicians and Party officials and consult them especially with regard to Constitutional advance.⁴⁶ (Brassington [1975], 44)

The most significant displays of Colonial Office support for the DLP resulted in the "Cabinet crisis" of 25 June to 8 July 1959 and the breakdown of the constitutional talks in London of 27 October to 25 November 1959 (Williams 1969, 170-2; Solomon 1981, 158-66; Brassington [1975], 43-6, 72-7). On both occasions, constitutional reform had been delayed by the Colonial Office who argued that "if the PNM were not successful in the next elections [they] could not bind the victorious party to implement a policy which they had opposed" (Solomon 1981, 166). This was forwarded even though the opposition's proposals had already been considered according to parliamentary convention. While the "Cabinet crisis" was resolved and a Cabinet system of

⁴⁴ After 1959 local Municipal and County Council elections were suspended until 1968, due to local government reforms.

⁴⁵ Brassington ([1975], 108-116) also tells of a CIA agent who had in March-April 1960 offered half a million US dollars to fund the Gomes-Brassington faction of the DLP.

⁴⁶ On his visit to Trinidad for the opening of the Federal Parliament on 22 April 1958, Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, John Profumo, had been briefed by Governor Beetham on the alleged exclusion of "non-Negro Ministers" from the PNM's inner party discussions on constitutional reform. On 24 April, both the Governor and the Minister of State raised the issue in discussions with the Chief Minister (Ghany 1996, 112-4). Brassington ([1975], 108-116) also tells of a CIA agent who had in March-April 1960 allegedly offered half a million US dollars to fund the Gomes-Brassington faction of the DLP.

government was introduced in 1959, the disputes on wider constitutional reform had been left unresolved.

"The Bankruptcy Which I Defy": Making the PNM's Will Prevail, 1960-2

In the face of electoral defeat and with both its constitution reforms and Chaguaramas demands in limbo, the PNM began a serious effort of popular mobilisation to make its political will prevail. Its first attempt in April 1958, less than a month after its Federal Elections defeat, was the most controversial. Addressing a crowd at Woodford Square on "The Danger Facing Trinidad and the West Indian Nation" (*PNM Weekly* 21 April 1958), Williams launched into an unrestrained attack against the backward, rural, Indian "wave of illiteracy" swamping the PNM's urban strongholds; he called the Indians a "hostile and recalcitrant minority" prostituting the name of India for selfish and reactionary ends; he chastised Victor Bryan for becoming a "lickspittle" of Bhadase Maraj; he accused the DLP of mere power-seeking and "keep[ing] the country down in the ditch in which they find themselves," the whites for wanting to "preserve the old aristocracy of the skin," the Church for "[abusing] the confessional for propaganda purposes," the "venal press" for carrying on "its vendetta against the PNM," and even non-voters who by staying home allowed the DLP to win.

The speech offended many, including the non-African Cabinet ministers and party executives, who registered their complaints to Williams. Williams, however, felt no need to retract or re-phrase his address, and repeated it in San Fernando in their presence (Mahabir 1978, 76-89). At the next sitting of the legislature, DLP member Lionel Seukeran introduced a motion of censure against the Chief Minister for his

"derogatory attack on the Indian Community" (*PNM Weekly* 2 June 1958, 6). Mahabir (1978, 79-80) writes that Williams had been led to believe that his three non-Negro Cabinet Ministers – Montano, Kamal Mohammed, and himself – were going to support the motion, but "in the interest of national peace" the three instead persuaded the opposition to drop the charges.

After this episode, the PNM Annual Convention, meeting on 17 October 1958, had decided to "go to the Party. The party left to fend for itself two years and nine months, becomes automatically and necessarily the number one priority from October 1958" (PNM 1966, 138-56). Plans for the establishment of a permanent headquarters, improved liaison between the party and government, a reorganised Central Office, the transformation of the party press, the extension of party education in weekend schools, and the keeping of party record books were some of the priorities listed. A noteworthy extension of this initiative had been the appointment of CLR James to edit a new party newspaper *The Nation*, launched on 6 December 1958 (Williams 1969, 267). Williams (1960a, 19-21) lavished high praise on the paper and its editor, right up to his 11 March 1960 Address to the Fourth Annual Party Convention, calling it "the textbook of Independence ... [giving the PNM] what it did not have before, a public relations voice in the outside world."⁴⁷

In that same address, Williams (1960a, 21) defiantly declared, "The war of Independence in on." The culmination of this activity was reached at 11:00 a.m. on 22 April 1960, the date and time that the PNM had adopted in September 1957 for the independence of the West Indian Federation. A rally was organised in Woodford

Square where, in conclusion to a stirring address by Williams, were burned in a bonfire "seven deadly sins" – the existing constitutions of Trinidad and Tobago and the West Indies, the 1941 Anglo-American Bases Agreement, the report of the 1956 Federal Capital Site Commission recommending against Trinidad, the Telephone Ordinance, the Democratic Party's "racial statement," and the *Trinidad Guardian*. Afterwards, a memorial on independence was read and the crowd marched peacefully around the Port of Spain Savannah, in the rain, while small delegations presented copies of the memorial at the Governor's Residence and the American Consulate (Williams 1969, 225-235).

The demonstration coincided with a decisive change in the British Government's attitude toward its colonies. In early 1960, British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan (elected in October 1959) ended his tour of Africa proclaiming that "the wind of change," i.e. the growth of national consciousness, was a political fact of which British Government policy had to take account (McIntyre 1974, 212). The fortunes of the PNM became bright once again. The dispute over the new constitutional proposals was solved during Secretary of State Iain MacLeod's visit to the West Indies on 7-19 June 1960, personally settling the matter in Trinidad. The new constitution provided for a Prime Minister heading a Cabinet of twelve Ministers. The post of Attorney-General (the last remaining *ex-officio* position) became a political post and the Governor became more or less a merely formal head of the state, required to act on the advice of the Prime Minister. A bicameral legislature was established, with a fully elected Lower House composed of thirty members. The wholly nominated twenty-one member Senate would be composed of twelve Prime Ministerial nominations, seven nominees of the

⁴⁷ James, however, had been expelled from the party on 2 October 1960 on charges of mismanagement (Williams 1969, 267-8). James (1984) has written his side of his relations with the PNM,

Governor, two from the Leader of the Opposition, and would have powers to debate but not decide (Malik 1971, 132; Spackman 1965, 294-8; Mordecai 1968, 236-44). Williams's 1955 constitutional reforms were thus realised by his PNM Government. The Constitution was to take effect immediately after the 1961 elections on 4 December (Williams 1969, 172).

In addition to the constitutional solution, came the renegotiation of the Bases Agreement. After some communication between London and Port of Spain, a Conference had been convened in Tobago from 28 September to 9 December at which the United States agreed to renegotiate its lease, ceding twenty-one thousand acres by 1962, committing itself to aid and training projects (including the development of a College of Arts and Sciences at the Trinidad Branch of the University College of the West Indies) and agreeing to a review of the situation in 1968 (Williams 1969, 235-45).⁴⁸

More fortune was showered on the PNM as the DLP had started to disintegrate. The beginning of the process could be seen on 1 September 1957 at the DLP's inaugural ceremony, which had avoided the question of party leadership. Victor Bryan (member of Council for the eastern county of St. Andrew/St. David, formerly of the TLP) had been elected provisional chairman of the party and was also made provisional leader of the federal party. The latter appointment was made after the intervention of the federal DLP's life leader, Alexander Bustamante, who, like WIFLP leader Norman Manley, did

interpreting the split in political-philosophical terms.

⁴⁸ There was one other major development after the March for Independence and Chaguaramas. This was the emergence of a Concordat between the Church and State, announced on Christmas Day 1960, bringing the denominational schools under Government scrutiny in order to properly administer the introduction of free secondary school education and a Common Entrance Examination, originally announced on 23 March in the 1960 Budget (Williams 1960b, 11-2; Ryan 1972, 232-7).

not contest the Federal Elections (Malik 1971, 98, Ryan 1972, 176, 183).⁴⁹ These one-year provisional appointments were ostensibly designed to allow time for the party to organise itself, while avoiding early leadership squabbles. Leaving the positions open, however, only encouraged the rivalries that were easily predictable, given the collection of political chiefs in the party (Brassington [1975], 13-4, 32-7). On 8 January 1958, five and a half months after the founding of the Trinidad and Tobago DLP, Bhadase Maraj (member of Council for Caroni North in central Trinidad, formerly of the PDP) was unanimously elected leader of its parliamentary wing. The following week Ashford Sinanan (member of Council for Pointe-à-Pierre in central/southern Trinidad, also formerly of the PDP) was chosen by Bustamante to become Federal Prime Minister if the DLP won the federal elections (Malik 1971, 99).

After the federal victory, however, Victor Bryan led a manoeuvre to oust Bhadase Maraj, feeling that Maraj, as a rural Hindu, would be a hindrance in the Trinidad and Tobago 1961 general elections, which the DLP felt it could win. Bryan was thwarted, however, and after the 1959 County Council elections he declared himself an independent in the Federal Parliament (Brassington [1975], 36-7, 61-4; Malik 1971, 105). Meanwhile, Gomes (Federal member for St. George West in north Trinidad, formerly of the POPPG) launched an attack – using his *Trinidad Guardian* columns and his parliamentary privilege – on Bustamante's anti-Federalism and his single-minded rivalry with his cousin Norman Manley. Bustamante resigned from the federal party over the issue. This in turn led to conflict between Gomes and Sinanan, who had been a firm Bustamante supporter (Brassington [1975], 32-40, 58-70).

⁴⁹ Williams also did not contest the Federal Elections (Ayearst 1960, 224). This general aloofness was partly a reaction to the limited jurisdiction and financial resources over which the West Indian Federation had authority, about which the *PNM Weekly* (3 March 1958, 2) expressed extreme dissatisfaction.

Adding to the troubles, Bhadase Maraj became sick and bedridden, and addicted to pethydrine, in 1959 (Brassington [1975], 91; Malik 1971, 105). Parliamentary leadership passed, without any institutionalised process, first to APT James (member of Council for Tobago, formerly of the TLP), who was unable to command the support of his colleagues, and then to Simbhoonath Capildeo (member of Council for Caroni South, formerly of the PDP) (Malik 1971, 106). During this confusion, Simbhoonath Capildeo's younger brother Rudranath, had been positioning himself to enter the party. Rudranath Capildeo, like Williams, was an Island scholar (of 1938). He received his Ph.D. in physics from London University, and returned to Trinidad in 1958-9 on the invitation of Williams, to accept the position of Principal of the newly established Trinidad Polytechnic (Malik 1971, 106).

Dr. Capildeo seemed to many an ideal solution to the leadership problems of the DLP: a man who could be considered Williams's intellectual equal, thereby attracting more non-Indian votes.⁵⁰ After some intrigue and irregularities Capildeo had displaced Bhadase Maraj on 29 March 1960 at a confused party Convention (Brassington [1975], 88-98).

Brassington, Albert Gomes and Romalho Gomes (the two Gomes were unrelated), although initially supporting Capildeo, had been piqued by Dr. Capildeo's violation proper procedure and his subsequent declaration that he would begin the DLP *de novo*, rewriting the party constitution and disregarding the structures, executive members, programmes, strategies and constitutional negotiating teams already in place. Adding

⁵⁰ Dr. Capildeo had made only small incursions in politics before – writing the 1953 PDP manifesto and giving public lectures on Hinduism (Brassington [1975], 22, 81-2) – so he had a relatively unspoiled reputation. The comic phrase "Doctor Politics" was coined by DLP member Romalho Gomes to describe this strategy (Brassington ([1975], 88).

insult to injury, soon after his leadership coup Capildeo had left Trinidad to resume teaching at the University of London. The dissident Port of Spain-based faction, following proper legal procedure, called a Conference at Queen's Hall in April 1960, expelled Dr. Capildeo, Sinanan and others, elected Albert Gomes as leader, and moved to organise for the coming Arima Borough by-elections. As a counter, on the day of the by-election a message from Dr. Capildeo had been published in the press announcing that DLP were not contesting any seats that day. The Gomes-Brassington faction had lost the by-elections (reportedly by only a small difference in votes) and subsequently left the party, with Albert Gomes and Brassington in June 1960 addressing a rally in Woodford Square denouncing the Capildeo-led DLP. Capildeo was now the unchallenged, and absent, leader of a fractured party (Brassington [1975], 98-124).

At a speech delivered on 30 May 1960, Williams commented,

Here we face a great tragedy, the tragedy of Trinidad and Tobago – that there is no opposition, there is none in sight, no opposition that is, which agreed on fundamentals, agreed on the national outlook, can present to the national community an alternative set of proposals, an alternative programme for the achievement of our material aim.

Opposition there is, opposition galore – but it is opposition for so. ...

These moral anarchists, these enemies of democracy, will sell their country down the Gulf of Paria, in order to achieve the prominence of Quislings and the notoriety of Judas Iscariot. ...

... [The PNM's perspectives] spring from an objective analysis, contradiction of which I defy, of the bankruptcy in every sphere of West Indian colonialism – whether it be the political, the constitutional, the economic, the social, the intellectual, the cultural, the moral. (Williams 1960c, 8-9, 11)

As the general elections of 1961 approached, the PNM introduced its controversial Representation of the People Act, debated on 20 January 1961, proposing to modernise the electoral system of Trinidad and Tobago by instituting permanent registration,

identification cards, voting machines, and a revised procedure for demarcating the new electoral boundaries. The DLP reacted strongly against these measures, claiming that the reforms attempted to disenfranchise illiterate, rural, Indian voters by intimidating them with "complex" application procedures, to rig elections through manipulation of the voting machines, and to gerrymander constituencies to ensure a PNM majority in light of the DLP's electoral victories in 1958 and 1959. The DLP's proposed 118 amendments to the 1961 Representation of the People Bill, but the party failed to achieve any of its objectives (Malik 1971, 110-2; Solomon 1981, 182-94; Williams 1969, 253-4).

The elections of 4 December 1961 have been considered the most tense in the country's history, with race seeming to dominate the campaigns (Malik 1971, 114-20; Ghany 1996, 153).⁵¹ Williams had highlighted the Negro-white tensions with his phrase "Massa Day Done," introduced on 20 December 1960 when he reported in Woodford Square on the renegotiation of the Bases Agreement at the Tobago Conference, and later expanded to an entire speech, delivered on 22 March 1962 and published as a pamphlet (Williams 1962b).⁵²

Indian-Negro tensions manifested themselves as early as January 1961 when DLP meetings were broken up by PNM supporters. In November the DLP complained that they were not protected by the Negro-dominated police.⁵³ Because of the alleged

⁵¹ Indian Cabinet Ministers Mohammed (Ghany 1996, 153-4) and Mahabir (1978, 76-81, 138) recalled racism directed at them from within the PNM itself. Mahabir, it seems, retired from politics in 1961 partly because of the race issue (Mahabir 1978, 137-142).

⁵² On 28 April 1961, Williams (1969, 249) had also criticised the small Tobago Independence Movement as "an attempt to maintain racial discrimination in Tobago." On 1 December 1961 Williams (1969, 276) continued to maintain that the dominant issue of the election was "the PNM versus the old Massa-dominated society of colonialism."

⁵³ As partial evidence, Malik (1971, 16) quotes a 1960 study by Arthur Niehoff which found that in St. Patrick, with an Indian population of 43 percent, only 3 out of 150 constables were Indian.

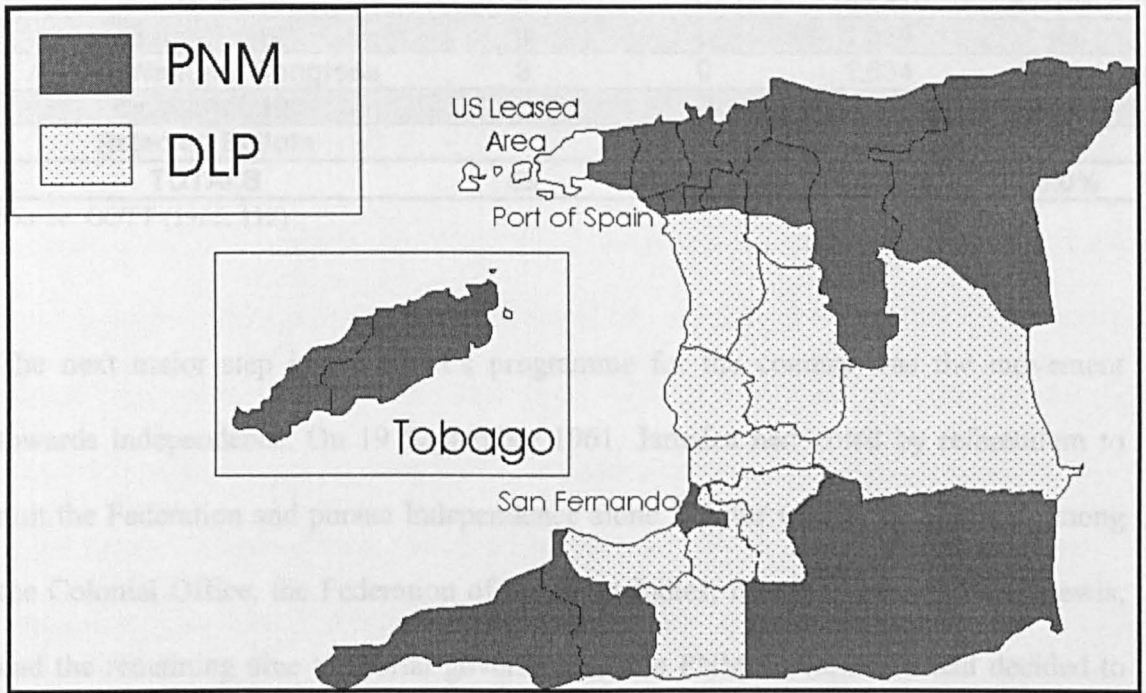
harassment, the DLP felt it necessary to suspend all public meetings for the three weeks before the elections. At the same time, the government refused to grant free air time to the party on the state-owned radio station (Malik 1971, 112, 117-8; Siewah 1994, 105-7; Ghany 1996, 152-7). Also exacerbating the tension was Dr. Capildeo's reputation for making intemperate and unbalanced statements,⁵⁴ starting with his first statement read in the Legislative Council on 8 April 1960. His most infamous remark was made on 15 October 1961, at a meeting held in front of the Governor's Residence in Port of Spain, in order to (unsuccessfully) deter molestation from PNM supporters. Capildeo lost his temper and announced to his supporters, "You will be called to arms. Wherever the PNM holds a meeting, you will have to break it up" (in Siewah 1994, 106). Indeed, violence did break out in some areas and on 22 November Minister of Home Affairs Patrick Solomon declared limited States of Emergencies in St. Augustine, Barataria, Caroni East and Chaguanas, with the police conducting armed house-to-house searches for ammunition. The searches turned up nothing (Singh 1993, 49; Malik 1971, 119-120; Solomon 1981, 181).

The election results returned the PNM in a sweeping victory, firmly entrenching their position in government with an unprecedented two-thirds majority. They captured 57 percent of the ballots cast, and won twenty seats. The DLP secured 42 percent of the votes and ten seats (GOTT 1965). In addition to its urban and peri-urban strongholds, the PNM were able to win Tobago and make significant inroads in the eastern counties and St. Patrick (areas where it performed poorly in 1956) while the DLP had captured

⁵⁴ For examples, see Malik (1971, 107-9), also Oxaal (1982, 159-73) who sympathetically reveals Capildeo's mental illness.

all the PDP seats and some of the Independent, TLP and Butlerite areas in the south and east (see Figure 3-2).⁵⁵

Figure 3-2. Distribution of Constituencies by Party, 1961 General Elections



Created by the author from Ryan (1972, 371) and GOTT (1965)

The turnout for the elections was the highest ever in Trinidad's history, 88.1 percent (GOTT 1965, 48). The PNM and DLP together polled 98.6 percent of the ballots cast. Only two other parties (the Butler Party and the African National Congress) and two independents contested, all losing their deposits. In addition, only the DLP's Fyzabad seat had a margin of less than 1,500 votes, being secured by a small margin of 126. Only sixty-nine candidates contested the elections. The result seemed to show the establishment of a two-party system in Trinidad and Tobago, with the PNM dominant (see Table 3-4).⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The DLP contested the results by submitting an election petition, basing its case mainly on the inaccurate working of the voting machines. The case was lost by a two to one decision in March 1962. In protest, the party boycotted the opening of Trinidad and Tobago's first parliament on 29 December 1961 (Solomon 1981, 179; Malik 1971, 123-7; Ghany 1996, 157).

⁵⁶ See Ryan (1972, 238-91) and Bahadoorsingh (1968, 25-97) for greater elaboration of the racial aspects of these elections.

Table 3-4. Election Statistics, 1961 General Elections

	Number of Candidates	Number of Seats Won	Total Number of Votes	% of Votes
PNM	30	20	190,003	60.0%
DLP	30	10	138,910	41.7%
Butler Party	4	0	1,314	0.4%
African National Congress	3	0	1,634	0.5%
Independents	2	0	1,502	0.5%
Rejected Ballots			149	0.0%
TOTALS	69	30	333,512	100.0%

Source: GOTT (1965, 112)

The next major step in the PNM's programme for the country was the movement towards independence. On 19 September 1961, Jamaica had voted by referendum to quit the Federation and pursue Independence alone.⁵⁷ After various discussions among the Colonial Office, the Federation of the West Indies, its new advisor Arthur Lewis, and the remaining nine territorial governments, the PNM Government had decided to withdraw Trinidad and Tobago, which would have had to provide almost 75 percent of the Federal budget while being allotted less than half of the seats in a Federal structure which it had consistently criticised as being too weak. A resolution was adopted by the PNM's General Council on 15 January 1962 stating that Trinidad and Tobago would

reject unequivocally any participation in the proposed Federation of the Eastern Caribbean and proceed forthwith to National Independence, without prejudice to the future association in a Unitary State of the people of Trinidad and Tobago with any Territory of the Eastern Caribbean whose people may so desire and on terms to be mutually agreed. (Williams 1969, 279)

⁵⁷ The vote was 256,261 (54.1 percent) against Federation, and 217,319 (45.9 percent) for it. There were with 5,640 spoilt ballots and the turnout rate was 60.9 percent (Mordecai 1968).

This resolution caused the British Government to terminate the Federation and grant independence on an individual territorial basis (Williams 1969, 277-9; Ghany 1996, 130-51).⁵⁸

The PNM then proceeded to draft an Independence Constitution.⁵⁹ The DLP, however, objected to the whole procedure – from the publication of the draft constitution on 19 February 1962 (upon which the public was invited to make comment) on the grounds that the opposition, representing 40 percent of the population, should have been made part of the process, to the Queen's Hall Conference held on 25-7 April 1962 in which presentations were made by seventy-five organisations and individuals, where the DLP walked out over objections to the "limited" format,⁶⁰ to the Joint Select Committee of Parliament (convened from 9-16 May 1962 to consider the public comments) in which the DLP were included, but voted down sixteen to nine (Malik 1971, 132-7; Spackman 1965, 298-300; Ghany 1996, 152). The DLP's objections, consistently overruled by the PNM, were motivated by a desire to establish a greater role for the opposition in providing a check on executive power and in the protection of minorities' interests.

On 11 May 1962, a draft constitution was accepted in the Lower House. Interestingly, during the debate Williams argued at length against a proposal by the Indian Association that Trinidad be ethnically partitioned along Cypriot lines and refuted in detail the arguments that Indians were discriminated against. Testifying to its

⁵⁸ Two days later, on 17 January, the Report of the Committee of the Legislature, which prepared proposals for a Constitution to take effect on Jamaica's Independence, was signed at Gordon House, Jamaica (Bell 1967). The date for independence was set for 6 August 1962.

⁵⁹ Spackman (1965, 295-320) provides a thorough examination of some of the major debates and issues surrounding the Independence Constitution.

⁶⁰ A representative from Association of County Councils of Trinidad and Tobago also followed them. The representative from the African National Congress, however, had been the first to object and leave (*Verbatim notes* 1962, 1-13; Spackman 1965, 318-9).

significance almost forty years after it was first written, Williams had quoted from Major Wood's 1922 Report, which had led to the establishment of electoral politics in Trinidad and Tobago, arguing that "[communal representation] would accentuate and perpetuate the differences which in order to produce a homogenous society it should be the object of statesmanship to remove" (quoted in Spackman 1965, 303).

The amended draft was taken to London for the Independence Conference at Marlborough House on 28 May 1962. The DLP, unsatisfied, increased its demands for a moratorium on independence, proportional representation in the police force, a constitutional provision for consultation between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition on major appointments and on all issues of national importance, a larger share for the DLP in the appointment of senators, and a provision for a two-thirds majority for adopting any legislative measure in the Senate. Emphasising the racial nature of the dispute, the Indian Association and the SDMS had gone to the Conference to protest the constitution. The Indian Association raised again its call for partition if proportional representation was not implemented.⁶¹ The PNM, however, were adamant that they would not concede to "government by the Opposition," but were not opposed to developing consultation as a conventional practice. On the whole they were supported by the Colonial Office (Malik 1971, 136-8). On 8 June, having made preparations to invite Secretary of State Reginald Maudling to intervene and abate the racial tensions, Williams approached Capildeo at tea break and suggested that he would

raise with the opposition the general question of national integration and national unity with specific reference to (a) Nehru's Integration Committee in India, (b) the promotion of the national culture, (c) the working out of a campaign code on elections, (d) fair employment practices without discrimination on grounds of race, political affiliation, etc. (Williams 1969, 285)

⁶¹ See Singh (1993) for a collection of Indian Association pamphlets, including a forty-six page document addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Reginald Maudling, dated 16 May 1962, outlining the case for proportional representation.

Capildeo agreed, and the date for Independence was set on 31 August 1962,⁶² allowing Williams to attend the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference in September⁶³ (Williams 1969, 284-6). In the final Trinidad and Tobago (Constitution) Order-in-Council 1962, the thirty entrenched provisions (i.e. requiring a two-thirds majority in both Houses) in the Report of the Joint Select Committee had been expanded to fourteen ordinarily entrenched and twenty-five specially entrenched provisions (i.e. requiring a three-quarters majority in the Lower House and a two-thirds majority in the Upper House), and the number of Opposition Senators had increased to four in an enlarged twenty-four member Senate. In addition, the Report of the London Conference included a commitment by the Prime Minister to honour the convention of consultation with the Leader of Opposition on all appropriate occasions, including the appointment of the chairmanship of the Election and Boundaries Commission (Malik 1971, 139-40; Spackman 1965, 308, 320).⁶⁴ The PNM had become firmly established governing party of an independent Trinidad and Tobago, dominating its politics.

Williams and the PNM had prevailed over the independent political tradition with party politics; vanquished the old politicians; established a Cabinet system of government, a bicameral legislature, and a liberal, non-racial constitution; secured American withdrawal from Chaguaramas; arrived at a Concordat on education with the Catholic Church; negotiated Independence with the British Government and with the

⁶² Grenada had applied for consideration to join the Unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago, but its application had lapsed after the Trinidad and Tobago Government referred the application to the United Kingdom with a request for economic assistance to facilitate the merger (Williams 1969, 286).

⁶³ Peter Farquhar (1988, 28-9), a member of the DLP team at Marlborough House, insists that "Williams' sole concern was that Bustamante might go to the Prime Minister's Conference and he might not be there," an opinion seemingly borne out Williams's autobiography (Williams 1969, 284-6).

⁶⁴ Reflecting on the situation two years later in the British *New Society*, Albert Gomes (1964, 16) expressed scepticism that the rapprochement between the racially-based political parties would "outlast the honeymoon period of independence," giving a pessimistic view of Trinidad and Tobago's future.

parliamentary opposition; and secured an unprecedented two-thirds majority in parliament. These achievements in the PNM's first six years were made out of a combination of political shrewdness, determination, toughness, aggression, luck, and circumstance, sometimes at the cost of antagonism and bitterness, particularly in terms of African-Indian relations. With an impressive force of will, Williams had pushed Trinidad and Tobago into a new era.

CHAPTER 4

“RIGHT BACK TO 1956”: POLITICS IN THE INDEPENDENCE PERIOD, 1962-81

In this chapter, we look at the peculiar challenges faced by Williams and the PNM from 1962 to 1981. After having been decisively defeated by the time of Independence in 1962, parliamentary opposition imploded through splits and non-participation. Meanwhile there had developed a vigorous and influential extra-parliamentary opposition to the Williams government. This movement, centred in the trade union movement and at the University of the West Indies, appealed to anti-imperialist, youth, socialist, “cultural nationalist” (particularly pro-African), and other anti-establishment sentiments current at the time. Despite the numerous protest marches, an army mutiny in 1970, and a No-Vote campaign in 1971 the PNM maintained its firm hold on government. However, in 1973 Williams had announced his frustration with the situation in Trinidad and Tobago and declared his intention to retire. Williams reversed his decision as the oil shock of 1973-4, together with further constitutional reform, provided a renewed opportunity to build a strong, secure, and independent state (in terms of both government and economy) which he had envisaged since 1956. Despite the continuous extra-parliamentary opposition, the new generation of opposition parties that emerged in 1976, and the challenge posed in 1980-1 by a break-away faction of the

PNM, the PNM maintained its two-thirds majority right up to Williams's death in 1981. Williams was continuously challenged during his long period in office and he prevailed over the disorganised, fragmentary opposition at every juncture.

"Don't Stop The Carnival": Unconventional Politics, 1962-73

In the first decade of independence the PNM advanced its programme for building the modern Trinidad and Tobago state, summarised by Sutton (1984, 44) as "the development and implementation of a foreign policy; the development of a sense of national community; public service reform; and reform of the economy by way of development planning, regulation of labour and capital, and tripartite consultation." Specifically, the PNM presented in 1963 its *Second Five Year Development Plan, 1964-68* (GOTT 1963), started the reorganisation of the public service in 1964, and instituted that same year a wide-ranging community development programme highlighted by the "Best Village" competition and the "Special Works" programmes for the unemployed. In the financial sector it passed the Central Bank and Banking Acts of 1964 and the controversial Finance Act of 1966 which sought to prevent the "leaking" of income earned in Trinidad and Tobago by increasing taxes on businesses. In 1965 the government passed perhaps its most socially important piece of legislation: the Education Act, placing the entire school system and its curriculum under closer government control in order to rationalise the process of expansion (Williams 1969,

307-9, 318; Robinson 1986, 30-44; Robinson 1988, 57; Ryan 1972, 340; Sutton 1979, 167-77).¹

Near the end of its term, in the 21 January 1966 edition of *The Nation* Williams reflected on the party's achievements in office: "It has been Ten Years of hard and relentless work, dedicated always to the public welfare, to political dignity and stability, to the national community, to the political education of our educated democracy" (Williams 1969, 324).

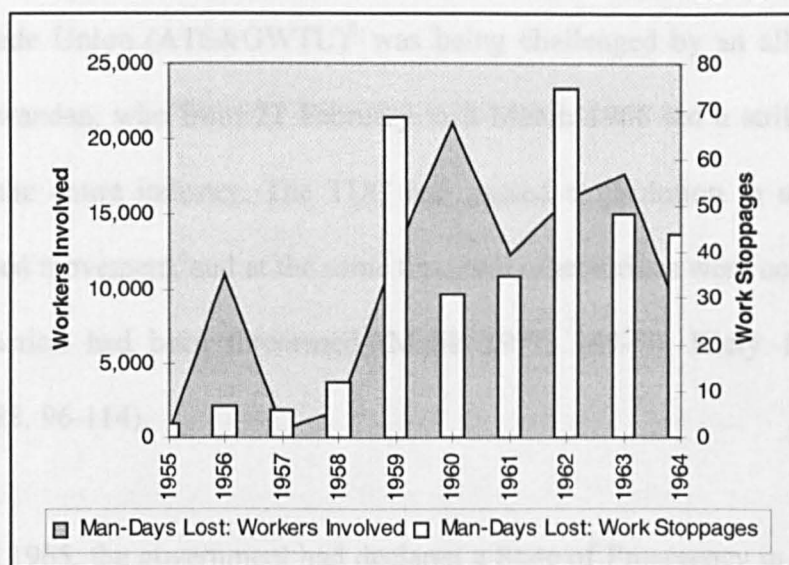
While the PNM made impressive achievements in government, the opposition were falling apart, reverting to the individualism, factionalism, and bacchanal that the PNM thought it destroyed in 1956.

Following his decisive failure to become Prime Minister in 1961, and his failure to secure safeguards in the 1962 Independence Constitution for the protection of minorities, in early 1963 Dr. Capildeo accepted a teaching post at the University of London. There were no established constitutional rules or requirements concerning leadership in the DLP, and Capildeo decided to retain his post as party leader, running the party from London and returning to Trinidad in the academic recess periods. Capildeo was able to retain his position in parliament as Leader of the Opposition as he was granted a special leave of absence by Speaker of the House, Arnold Thomasos, PNM MP for Arima (Malik 1971, 141-4; Ghany 1996, 158-9).

¹ The expansion of educational opportunities under the PNM had been impressive, and transformed an entire generation. Between 1955 and 1964 there had been a 30 percent increase in primary school enrolment and a 140 percent increase in secondary school enrolment. In 1955, 204 children went to secondary school at Government expense; the number in 1962 was 3,291 and in 1964 was 3,750 (Williams 1969, 318).

Absurdly, in March 1963 Capildeo gave the DLP – founded in 1957 on an anti-socialist platform – a new creed of “Democratic Socialism.” Fed up with his antics, the (nominated) DLP executive called for Dr. Capildeo to resign. As a compromise, in the Christmas recess of 1963 Dr. Capildeo appointed Stephen Maharaj (a former member of the Butler Party) as Leader of Opposition, while retaining leadership of the party. Still unsatisfied, in January (after Dr. Capildeo had returned to London) the executive attempted to install Maharaj as party leader as well. In retaliation, Capildeo dismissed the entire executive. On 13 January 1964 three MPs (two Negroes and one Muslim, newly elected in 1961) – Dr. Montgomery Forrester, party chairman; Peter Farquhar, editor of the party paper; and Tajmool Hosein – resigned from the DLP, reducing the party’s parliamentary strength to seven (all with Hindu backgrounds). In March 1964, the three ex-DLP MPs formed the Liberal Party of Trinidad and Tobago, giving parliament an additional opposition party (Malik 1971, 141-5).

In 1965 another split occurred in the DLP as a result of the government’s Industrial Stabilisation Act (ISA), introduced on 18 March during a State of Emergency. The ISA had been precipitated by a number of events. Strike activity had increased greatly from the late 1950s (see Figure 4-1), as a strong section of the trade union leadership began to actively oppose the PNM, who in the 1961 elections had received notable support from the national Trades Union Congress (TUC) (Ryan 1972, 256-9; Malik 1971, 118-9; Kambon 1988, 40-6).

Figure 4-1. Man-Days Lost: Workers Involved and Work Stoppages, 1955-1964

Created by the author from CBTT (1993)

George Weekes – elected to the Presidency of the Oilfields Workers Trade Union (OWTU)² on 25 June 1962, and a great admirer of Butler – had become a central figure opposed to the PNM and its policies (Kambon 1988, 49). The antagonism between the government and the radical trade union leadership was highlighted by the February 1963 OWTU strike against British Petroleum (Kambon 1988, 67-9). In response, on 5 April 1963 the government announced in parliament that it had decided to set up an inquiry into the oil industry and another inquiry into subversive activity in the country (Henry 1989, 48-9; Williams 1969, 318).³ The trade union movement eventually split in two when the TUC (also led by Weekes) boycotted Tripartite talks with the government in October 1964 (Kiely 1996, 99).

² The OWTU was established on 25 July 1937 and registered on 15 September 1937 (while Butler was incarcerated) by Butler's assistant, Adrian Cola Rienzi (Krishna Deonarine) (GORTT 1998, 63; Kiely 1996, 74).

³ This had followed the Honeyman Commission of 1962 which had investigated the disturbances in the sugar industry and in its report, released near the end of March 1963, concluded that "deliberate subversion" was at work there (Kambon 1988, 89).

In the sugar industry, Bhadase Maraj's leadership of the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union (ATS&GWTU)⁴ was being challenged by an ally of Weekes, Krishna Gowandan, who from 21 February to 8 March 1965 led a strike that spread throughout the entire industry. The TUC had passed a resolution in support of the Gowandan-led movement, and at the same time two other strikes were occurring, while one other action had been threatened (Malik 1971, 149-50; Kiely 1996, 99-102; Kambon 1988, 96-114).

On 9 March 1965, the government had declared a State of Emergency in the sugar belt of Caroni, against the advice of DLP Leader of Opposition Stephen Maharaj. On 22 March the State of Emergency had been extended to Barataria in order to place CLR James under house arrest (Look Lai 1992, 197-8; Kiely 1996, 99; Williams 1969, 311).⁵

Three days after the initial declaration of the emergency, legislation restricting strike action had been introduced in parliament and on 18 March the report of the Commission of Enquiry into subversive activities had been tabled. Also tabled at the 18 March sitting of parliament was the Industrial Stabilisation Bill, based on Australian legislation, seeking to regulate labour disputes through compulsory recognition, settlement of disputes by an Industrial Court, and a ban on strike activity (Williams 1969, 311-4; Malik 1971, 150).

⁴ The union is also referred to as the All-Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factory Workers Trade Union and was also formed by Rienzi in the aftermath of the 1937 riots.

⁵ James, who had been mentioned in the Commission's report on subversive activities tabled in parliament four days earlier, had been in the country only eighteen hours, arriving as a cricket correspondent for the London *Times* and *Observer* (Look Lai 1992, 197-8).

Despite Maharaj's instructions, only three DLP MPs, and none of the DLP senators (including Thomas Bleasdel, DLP public relations officer; and Mrs. Lucky Samaroo, the party treasurer) opposed the legislation, which had been criticised greatly by the radical trade unions (Malik 1971, 150-1). The Governor-General, Sir Solomon Hochoy, assented to the ISA on 20 March. The ISA issue had grouped the DLP into centrist (led by Vernon Jamadar), radical (led by Maharaj), and conservative (led by Ashford Sinanan and LF Seukeran) factions. In June 1965, the rivalry reached a peak when the conservative faction outmanoeuvred Maharaj (who had attempted to replace the current DLP senators with CLR James, AC Rienzi, and Clive Phil) and instead had persuaded the Governor-General to install as Leader of Opposition Simbhoonath Capildeo (Dr. Capildeo's elder brother).

Not until the July 1965 academic recess did Dr. Capildeo make any interventions, and when he did so it was highly erratic. Dr. Capildeo denounced the ISA; accused his brother of being the main cause of trouble in the DLP and of even sending a hired killer after him; applauded the PNM for the stability and progress they had brought to the country; and accused James, Maharaj, and Rienzi of hatching a "plot" and attempting to "make a deal" with him by offering him the prime ministership of the country (Malik 1971, 148-157).

As a result, the DLP split again: Maharaj (with George Weekes and CLR James, and others) formed the Workers and Farmers Party (WFP) on 8 August 1965 (Parris 1976, 188), Simbhoonath Capildeo joined the Liberal Party, and Lionel Seukeran declared himself an independent. By 1966, the parliamentary opposition had comprised four DLP, four Liberal, one WFP, and one Independent members. The two-party system did not survive the term.

The next general elections were held on 7 November 1966. Thirty-six seats were contested, in accordance with the newly passed constitutional provision prescribing one seat for every twelve thousand electors (Williams 1969, 332). Following the disintegration of the DLP in parliament, 154 candidates contested, in contrast to the 69 candidates contesting in 1961. In every seat the PNM, DLP, the Liberals, and the WFP put up candidates, except in Tobago West where the WFP did not contest (GOTT 1967, 83).⁶ Three other parties contested, in addition to six independents. With the greatly increased number of candidates, it was perhaps not surprising that the PNM and DLP received a lower share of the vote than they did in 1961 (Table 4-1).

Table 4-1. Election Statistics, 1966 General Elections

	Number of Candidates	Number of Seats Won	Total Number of Votes	% of Votes
PNM	36	24	158,573	52.4%
DLP	36	12	102,792	34%
Liberal Party	36	0	26,870	8.9%
WFP	35	0	10,484	3.5%
People's Democratic Party	1	0	943	0.3%
Butler Party	4	0	704	0.2%
Seukeran Independent Party	2	0	569	0.2%
Independents	4	0	1,467	0.5%
Rejected Ballots			146	0.1%
TOTAL	154	36	302, 548	100%

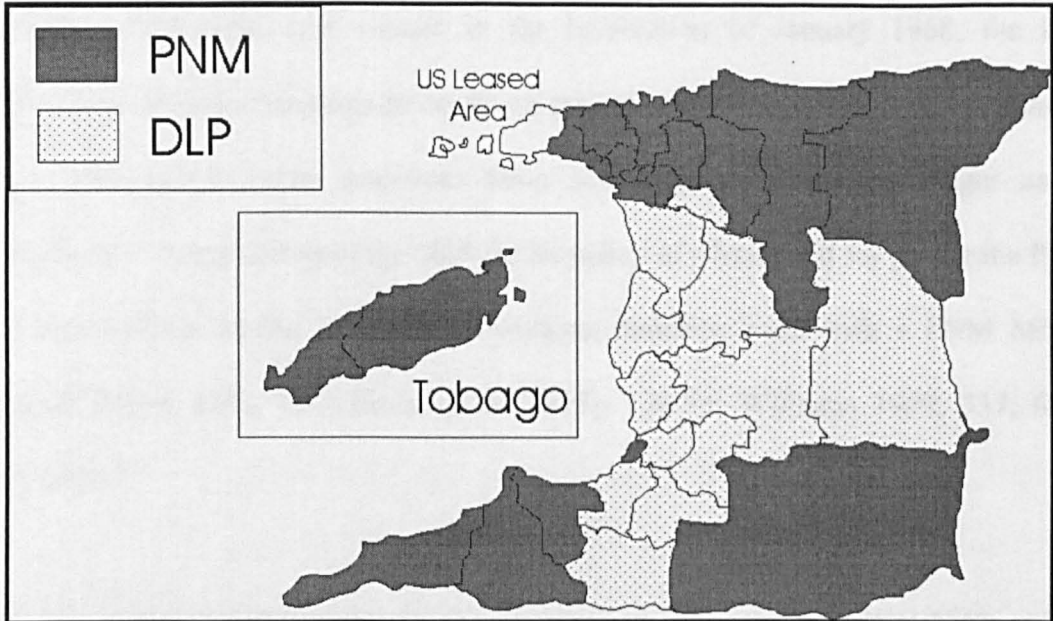
Source: GOTT (1967, 83)

In contrast to the increase in candidates, there were 30,964 less voters than in 1961, giving a turnout rate of 66 percent. In addition, the proportional distribution of the seats had been exactly the same as 1961: the PNM won two-thirds of the seats and the DLP one-third, in the same geographical areas (see Figure 4-2). The Liberals could not

⁶ Williams (1969, 332-7) gives a detailed account of the campaign, the most neglected by political observers. In the three best accounts of the period, Malik (1971, 157-8) gives it just over a page, Oxaal (1982, 182) devotes to it half of a paragraph, and Ryan (1972) omits it completely.

capture any seats, and all the WFP candidates lost their deposits. Besides the PNM, only the DLP – and only in a fractional form – would contest general elections again.

Figure 4-2. Distribution of Constituencies by Party, 1966 General Elections



Created by the author from Ryan (1972, 394) and GOTT (1967)

The DLP continued on its long process of decay, almost completely removing itself from political relevance. The party's decision to shun the radical trade union movement seemed to be vindicated by the poor showing of the WFP, and the DLP continued to blame the voting machines for their defeat, calling the elections a "big fraud" (Malik 1971, 158).⁷ In protest, Dr. Capildeo ordered the party to "maintain silence" in parliament as a strategy of noncooperation designed to embarrass the government by making a mockery of the two-party system (Hanoomansingh 1999).

Dr. Capildeo had given a promise to stay in the country in the new parliament, no matter what the result. However, in April 1967 he was granted by the party a two-year

leave of absence to work on a textbook, *Vector Algebra and Mechanics: Theory, Problems, and Solutions*⁸ (Siewah 1994, 650). In December 1967, however, the Speaker of the House refused Capildeo's request for further leave and declared Capildeo's Chaguanas seat vacant. In the by-election of January 1968, the DLP conducted a no-vote campaign as an act of protest and the seat was won by Bhadase Maraj who had by then recovered from his drug addiction and fought as an independent.⁹ Maraj criticised the DLP for its policy of silence and for giving the PNM an opportunity to secure a two-thirds working majority, even with a PNM MP as Speaker (Malik 1971, 158; Brassington [1975], 129-74; Williams 1969, 337; Ryan 1972, 449).¹⁰

The DLP was forced to abandon its non-cooperation strategy and in June 1968 – along with the PNM; the (never to be seen again) United Country Group, St. Andrew-St. David; and thirty independents – contested the municipal and county elections, the first held since 1959. The turnout was low, 29.1 percent, but the PNM demonstrated its dominance of the political scene once again. The party faced no opponents in fourteen of the one hundred seats, won a total of sixty-eight seats, and controlled all three municipalities and four of the seven County Councils. The DLP secured twenty-eight seats, and independents won five (Williams 1969 337; GOTT [1969]).¹¹

⁷ Many people in the wider community, including the Government, had found the registration and voting arrangements during the elections to be unsatisfactory, and public criticism grew (Williams 1969, 336; Malik 1971, 158). By 1976 the voting machines had been replaced by ballot boxes.

⁸ The book was published in 1968 in London by the Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

⁹ The WFP invited the DLP and the Liberals to form the Tripartite Committee of the Trinidad and Tobago Opposition Parties (1968) to protest the use of voting machines instead of ballot boxes.

¹⁰ When Bhadase made his re-entrance in parliament, Williams rose from his seat to cross the floor and shake Bhadase's hand, something which Williams had never done before or since, and whose shot became something of a standard "flashback" for the local press (Brassington [1975], 149-50).

¹¹ The division of votes, however, was less extreme, with the PNM winning 50 percent and the DLP 40 percent (GOTT [1969]).

Opposition to the PNM outside the institutions of government was growing more vocal. The failure of the parliamentary opposition to articulate a coherent position and ally itself in the ISA controversy of 1965 perhaps encouraged the growth of "unconventional politics," expressed by a wide array of extra-parliamentary groups drawing from a variety of radical anti-establishment, socialist, and black nationalist perspectives, with an almost complete disregard for the formal processes of government.¹²

By making strike action illegal the ISA had calmed considerably the industrial relations climate.¹³ The radical trade union movement had been further energised with the election of Joe Young to the leadership of the Transport and Industrial Workers Union (TIWU) based in north Trinidad. Both Young and Weekes led marches and demonstrations in 1967 and 1968 in defiance of the ISA (Kambon 1988, 175-80; Kiely 1996, 112-3).

In 1968, the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC) had emerged out of the Guild of Undergraduates at the University of the West Indies (UWI) under the presidency of Geddes Granger. Granger encouraged the Guild to make links with community organisations, trade unions, and other "people's organisations" through a radicalising outreach and education programme. On 26 February 1969, NJAC was formally launched to protest the recent arrest of West Indian students at Sir George Williams

¹² Oxaal (1982, 195-305), Ghany (1996, 263-70) and Kambon (1988, 171-274) (a leader of the National Joint Action Committee [NJAC]), Shah (1971) (a leader of the army mutiny), Craig (1982a), Sutton (1983), and Meeks (1976) provide informative, detailed, and close-up accounts of the unrest. Also, Ryan and Stewart's collection (1996) gathers interesting retrospectives, twenty-five years later, from the major participants.

¹³ As a result of the ISA, in 1965 only four strikes were recorded, involving 7,610 workers. Officially, 1966 had been strike free (MacDonald 1986, 151).

University in Montreal, Canada. They blocked Canadian Governor-General, Roland Michener, from entering the UWI campus, demonstrated against Canadian imperialism, and more generally, against "racism at home and abroad" (Kambon 1999; Kambon 1988, 193; Thomas and Riddell 1971, 4).

Other important organisations were founded around the same time as NJAC: *The Trinidad Express* started publication in June 1967 as the first locally owned daily newspaper, sympathising with local viewpoints in an unprecedented way; the Tapia House Group was founded by UWI economics lecturer Lloyd Best on 14 November 1968, definitively ending the New World Group (founded in 1962); and a rival organisation, Moko, had been formed October in the same year by UWI history lecturer James Millette, also a former member of the defunct New World Group. In addition, there had been a host of smaller ephemeral community, youth, cultural, religious, and other groups from the middle and lower classes throughout the country, inspired by the radical ideas current at the time (*TE* 31 May 1987, 2; Best 1999; Oxaal 1982, 214; Ryan 1972, 470; *TTR* March 2000, 26; Benn 1987, 84). In May 1969, many of these cultural, university, political and trade union groups joined together – including NJAC, George Weekes, OWTU lawyer and ex-WFP candidate Basdeo Panday¹⁴ – to confront the police in solidarity with TIWU transport workers who had been striking for three weeks, protesting a ruling of the Industrial Court (Kambon 1988, 171-80).

What became known as the "Black Power Revolution" began during the Carnival celebrations on 9 February 1970, where a masquerade band called "Pinetoppers" had

¹⁴ DLP MPs Vernon Jamadar and Alloy Lequay were present at early planning meetings but did not join the action. Older politicians Peter Farquhar and Stephen Maharaj, however, did join and were incarcerated with the other more youthful activists (Kambon 1988, 179-82).

caused a stir by portraying revolutionary heroes such as Fidel Castro, Stokely Carmichael, and Malcom X in its band, "The Truth about Africa" (Kambon 1999). On 26 February 1970, one year after their first meeting, NJAC led a march in Port of Spain demonstrating against racism at home and abroad, the Canadian "imperialist" banks, and then famously entered the Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (for which the leaders were later charged); on 4 March they renamed Woodford Square – out of political use for years – the "People's Parliament" and led a ten thousand strong march from Port of Spain to the Shanty Town on the eastern edge; on 12 March under the banner "Indians and Africans Unite Now" a much longer march was organised from Port of Spain to Caroni; and the marches continued, occasionally resulting in vandalism and destruction of property.¹⁵

On 23 March, Dr. Williams (1970d, 6) had addressed the nation in a television broadcast declaring, "I am for Black Power." He sympathised with the demands of the youthful demonstrators and stressed that the demands were "entirely legitimate and in the interest of the community as a whole." He reminded his audience that the PNM had been addressing these concerns continuously in programmes to remove racial discrimination, provide opportunities for education, localise decision making, promote small businesses, and restrict alien landholdings, while he expressed sympathy with the marchers' frustration at the slow pace of change. In response, the Prime Minister announced the introduction of a special 5 percent levy "devoted exclusively to providing jobs in all counties and Municipalities, including training facilities for various skills which the country requires" and the establishment of the country's first

¹⁵ Oxaal (1982, 214-6) provides an excellent, organised chronology of the myriad events of the time.

locally owned commercial bank. He further stressed that "the Government remains ready to give serious and sympathetic study to any concrete proposals that may be formulated," and that six such approaches to dialogue had already been made. He continued,

Our young people are a part of the general world malaise, seeking something new and something better, and seeking it with a sense of urgency. They are restless, frustrated, possibly a little exuberant. But let there be no misunderstanding about this. It is a horse of a different colour if what is involved is arson and molotov cocktails. In that case the law will have to take its course. (Williams 1970b, 9)

Despite Williams's plea for more constructive approaches, marches continued to be the main expression of the movement, and the police increased their efforts to keep the crowds under control. On 6 April, a young demonstrator was shot and killed by the police, rallying more persons to the marches. Quite unexpectedly, and adding to the atmosphere of disarray, on 13 April 1970 Deputy Prime Minister, Deputy Leader of the PNM, and Member of Parliament for Tobago East, ANR Robinson announced his resignation from the Cabinet in a speech critical of the PNM Government given to the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Trade Union (Ghany 1996, 264-6).¹⁶ Meanwhile, on 18 April in central Trinidad sugar workers went on strike at Brechin castle. The OWTU, TIWU, and NJAC planned actions to express their solidarity with the sugar workers and there had been rumours of a general strike. On 21 April 1970, almost ten years to the day after the PNM's March for Independence and Chaguaramas, a State of

¹⁶ See Robinson (1986, 119-28) for a similar speech delivered to that union's annual conference on 29 August 1970. Robinson had earlier replaced as Deputy Leader of the PNM Patrick Solomon, who had been relieved of his post in 1966 due to his involvement in a police case regarding his future stepson, in addition to other difficulties with Williams (Solomon 1975, 234-47). In April 1967 Robinson was moved from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of External Affairs, and this was widely interpreted as a move by Williams to sideline Robinson after the controversy over the Finance Act occurred in 1966 (Sutton 1979, 171-2; Ghany 1996, 264-6). Robinson's official resignation from the party occurred with a statement issued to the General Council on 20 September 1970 (Robinson 1986, 129-30).

Emergency was declared and fifteen Black Power leaders were arrested. Small skirmishes with the police, fires, and alarms occurred in Port of Spain, but were controlled in a matter of hours. However, one 750-member section of the Trinidad Defence Force, led by the young Raffique Shah and Rex Lasalle, in broad sympathy with the Black Power movement, mutinied at the Teteron barracks, taking hostages. The rebels were contained by a Coast Guard ship off Chaguaramas, and after five days of negotiations, the hostages were surrendered and the mutineers arrested. In the end, five people were killed (MacDonald 1986, 165-6; Oxaal 1982, 216).

During this time Williams delivered three further nation-wide broadcasts, on 3 May, 10 May, and 30 June (Williams 1970a, 1970b, 1970c). Williams (1970c) again emphasised, "Let me make no bones about it: I identify myself fully with [Black Power's] constructive aspect." He announced a number of measures to effect "within the limits of the Constitution" a widespread programme of social, economic and political National Reconstruction, essentially speeding up, rededicating, and elaborating already existing programmes of the PNM, such as the Third Five-Year Plan and constitutional reform.¹⁷ In keeping with his stress on order, Williams emphasised that the fate of mutineers would be determined by the Courts. On 10 May 1970, Williams announced a major Cabinet reshuffle, for which he secured the resignation, "by Parliamentary convention," of three Ministers (including the two local white Cabinet members, John O'Halloran and Gerard Montano [Ghany 1996, 273]), and three senators, in order to bring in "new men and the ideas they can offer."

¹⁷ In the 27 October 1969 Speech from the Throne, a Joint Select Committee to consider constitutional change had been proposed. The Committee was never formed, most likely due to the unrest that followed.

To secure the forces of law and order, a new Ministry of National Security, with Williams at the head, was also announced in May (Williams 1970b). On 7 August 1970 the government introduced the draft National Security Act 1970 (Public Order Bill) which would require permission to be granted for marches, imposed penalties for the incitements to racial hatred or violence, prohibited quasi-military organisations, and empowered the police to search premises and seize firearms. The bill was circulated for public comment and ANR Robinson, with his newly formed group, the Action Committee of Democratic Citizens (ACDC), was prominent in leading opinion against the legislation. The bill was withdrawn on 13 September 1970. As a matter of principle, Attorney-General Karl Hudson-Phillips¹⁸ offered his resignation over the affair, but the Prime Minister refused it (Ryan 1972, 446-7, 465-7).

On 19 November, the State of Emergency was lifted, all except five political prisoners were released from custody, and another Cabinet reshuffle had been announced (Ghany 1996, 272; MacDonald 1986, 168). Continuing the process of rededication, on 27-9 November 1970 the PNM had convened a Special Convention to approve "PNM's Perspectives in the World of the Seventies" later known as "The Chaguaramas Declaration – Perspectives for The New Society (People's Charter 1956, Revised)" (PNM 1970). It was a major re-statement of the party's role in helping "the West Indian people to acquire economic as well as political power, ... to make their own culture, to participate fully in both the political and economic process, and to become true men instead of what one critic has savagely called us mimics"¹⁹ (PNM 1970, 7).

¹⁸ His father, Henry Hudson-Phillips, had been President of the POPPG (Ryan 1989b, 267).

¹⁹ Referring to the novel, *The Mimic Men*, by V.S. Naipaul, nephew of Simbhoonath and Dr. Rudranath Capildeo.

Meanwhile, the DLP had also undergone a process of renewal. In July 1969, Vernon Jamadar was able to capture the leadership from Dr. Capildeo,²⁰ and PNM founding member Dr. Elton Richardson²¹ and UWI lecturer Dr. Krishna Bahadoorsingh were brought in as Deputy Political Leaders. Less than two weeks after the State of Emergency was lifted, on 1 December 1970 the DLP had moved a vote of no confidence in the government (MacDonald 1986, 169-70; Ryan 1972, 449-50). In December 1970, the DLP formed an alliance with the ACDC to contest the coming elections, with Robinson as the coalition leader. On 6 March 1971, the PNM published a draft election manifesto and on 28 March presented its thirty-six candidates in Woodford Square. In April 1971, Williams advised the Governor-General to announce the election date as 24 May 1971, instead of November 1971 when parliament was due to be dissolved (Ghany 1996, 274; MacDonald 1986, 170).

On 9 May, three days before nomination day, Robinson declared at a rally in the Queen's Park Savannah that he would neither contest the elections nor support any party or candidate who did. The DLP, who felt that the ACDC-DLP coalition could have finally toppled Williams, were upset by Robinson's move and the two factions split acrimoniously. Robinson claimed that he had fulfilled the ACDC-DLP promise to boycott the elections if the government did not introduce electoral reform – including the removal of voting machines, the lowering of the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen, the provision of equal media time for all political parties, and the re-drawing of constituency boundaries under an independent Electoral Boundaries Commission. Williams called Robinson a "half-wit" and poked fun at his failed alliance (Ryan 1972,

²⁰ The following year, Dr. Capildeo died in London in May 1970 (Siewah 1994, 677).

475-7; Ryan 1989b, 2; Ghany 1996, 275; Robinson 1999). Significantly, NJAC, Tapia House, and United National Independence Party (emerging out of Moko in February 1970) refused to contest and instead a No-Vote campaign had been embarked upon to pressure the government to embark on electoral reforms before elections were held.

The 1971 elections proceeded as planned, with only the marginal Democratic Liberation Party (led by Bhadase Maraj), African National Congress (led by John Broomes), and two independents contesting the PNM (Ghany 1996, 275; Ryan 1972, 453-70). The PNM won all thirty-six seats, with only 26 percent of the registered electorate voting. The PNM alone polled 84.1 percent of all votes cast. Sixty-four candidates contested, but in eight constituencies PNM candidates were unopposed (GOTT 1972b; see Table 4-2).²²

Table 4-2. Election Statistics, 1971 General Elections

	Number of Candidates	Number of Seats Won	Total Number of Votes	% of Votes
PNM	36	36	99,723	84.1%
Democratic Liberation Party	21	0	14,940	12.6%
African National Congress	7	0	2,864	2.4%
Independents	2	0	997	0.8%
Rejected Ballots			73	0.1%
TOTAL	66	36	118,597	100.0%

Source: GOTT (1972b, 71)

In the Local government elections held later that same year, the boycott was stronger.

Only twenty-eight of the one hundred seats were contested, and the PNM won them all

²¹ Richardson had been dismissed from the PNM in the 1956-61 term for "fraternising with the enemy" (Mahabir 1978, 69; Brassington [1975], 53).

²² In Greene's (1971) analysis of the 1971 elections, he argues that Williams had become "dictator by default," that the PNM were the country's only effective party, and noted the impotence of the opposition.

(GOTT [1972a], 46-8). Parliamentary noncooperation was now complete, to the point of nihilism.

The extra-parliamentary opposition continued after the elections, reaching a new extreme in late 1971 with the emergence of an armed "revolutionary" group calling itself the National Union of Freedom Fighters (NUFF).²³ The group had been led by Guy Harewood, the son of Jack Harewood, Government director of statistics and head of the economics research department at UWI, and many of its members were from similar backgrounds. NUFF were involved in bank robberies and some non-fatal shoot-outs, romantically trying to inspire a general resistance.²⁴ At the same time, labour militancy had been increasing once again: on 11 September 1971 the radical Council of Progressive Trade Unions had been formed, and in that year alone there had been seventy-one work stoppages involving 18,367 workers (one in every eighteen) (CBTT 1993). Due to the labour unrest, on 19 October 1971 the government called a State of Emergency once again²⁵ (MacDonald 1986, 172; Kambon 1988, 262, 271; CPTU 1991; Ryan 1989b, 5-7).

Critics called for the government to "step down,"²⁶ to which Williams replied,

Imagine last year this same man [Robinson] opposed the creation of the State of Emergency and now he wants the Governor General to declare a State of

²³ See Meeks (1999) for an excellent insight into the group, including interviews with surviving members and details of key events.

²⁴ Ryan (1989b, 7) quotes from one of their broadsheets, "[Death is] as meaningful as the oxygen in our lungs. We define death in our own terms and do not fear it." Guy Harewood was killed by police on 17 October 1973 and NUFF's armed activities soon ceased (Meeks 1999; *Guardian* [London] 20 October 1973, p.4).

²⁵ In his televised announcement of the emergency, Williams assured the population that there would be "parang [Spanish-Trinidadian Christmas music] as usual ... [and] Carnival as usual" (in Kambon 1988, 263).

²⁶ In June 1971, for example, ANR Robinson suggested that the Governor-General call a State of Emergency and install an interim government to implement electoral reform, with fresh elections to take place within one month (Ryan 1972, 485).

Emergency. ... We got our vote. What do you want us to do? Stop a race because one horse did not go? ... [The lack of an opposition is nothing new, since] for 18 months [the DLP] said nothing and on occasions walked out to leave us to carry on. (quoted in Ryan 1972, 485)

Williams formed a government without an opposition, forcing the Governor-General to declare the position of Leader of the Opposition vacant, leaving the Upper House without Opposition Senators. To overcome this problem, the government indicated, via the Speech from the Throne on 18 June 1971, that it would "adopt four types of measures to ensure that alternative views ... [were] heard and respected": publishing proposed legislation for comment by the public; introducing legislation in the Senate first, wherever possible; further enlisting the assistance of the Senate in Joint Committees of both Houses; and appointing a Member from the Senate to head the Public Accounts Committee to ensure the strictest possible control over government expenditures by parliament.²⁷ Another problem posed by the lack of an opposition was that the Joint Select Committee to consider constitutional reform could not be formed. Accordingly, it was announced in the Throne speech that a ten-member Constitution Commission composed of prominent citizens (under the chairmanship of Sir Hugh Wooding, a former Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago) would be formed in its place (Ghany 1996, 273, 278).

²⁷ On 21 July 1972, however, JRF Richardson (brother of former PNM foundation member Dr. Elton C. Richardson), MP for Point Fortin and Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, had been appointed Leader of Opposition after he crossed the floor and formed the United People's Party. Richardson was soon followed by MP for Siparia Dr. Horace Charles (Ghany 1996, 276-80; Ryan 1989b, 96). This development had been interpreted by some as a cynical ploy by Dr. Williams to give an air of normality in parliament (Ryan 1989b, 62; Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 124). The announcement that Richardson was an independent member was made on 14 June 1972, the same day that the Industrial Relations Bill was presented to the House.

Faced with the nihilistic anarchy of political opposition in Trinidad, the PNM continued its assertion of constitutional order. In his address to the PNM's Annual Convention held on 29 September to 1 October 1972, Williams commented,

Our 14th Annual Convention finds our Party, the People's National Movement, in continuing control of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. This control, looking at the situation as objectively as possible, is likely to continue. I have come to this conclusion after an analysis of the forces, and interests in opposition to the PNM.

First there are the political parties and their leaders. Notwithstanding all their predictions of doom, the country has not collapsed since the elections in May last year. Notwithstanding their persistent efforts at home and abroad to smear and denigrate our Police Service, we have no police state. Despite all their talk of repressive laws, they say what they like, meet as they like, the only problem being that it would appear that they cannot get people to come out to them. Their civil disobedience campaign proposal has had no impact. They spend their time belabouring one another. The electorate can see all this for itself without any interference from the PNM and will draw the inevitable conclusion that they are accustomed to draw for 15 years: if this is the sort of way these people behave in opposition, what can one expect of them if they ever form the government? (Williams 1972, 1)

Williams declared, "I couldn't care less whether we use voting machines, sewing machines, computers, ballot box, Indian ballot box, cardboard box, soap box, show of hands, voice vote or acclamation. As far as I am concerned, 'same Khaki pants.'... They ask for constitutional reform, they will get constitutional reform. They want electoral reform, they will get electoral reform. They say they want reduction of the voting age, they will get reduction of the voting age" (in Ryan 1989b, 4). About an unnamed Indian "self-styled party," Williams quipped, "This is another example of what I have repeatedly indicated to the population of Trinidad and Tobago, that political ambition ... should be made of sterner stuff" (Williams 1972, 13).

In dealing with the protesters of 1970, he remarked, "It was a very simple strategy: give them rope and they will hang themselves. But more important than that, you would be

able to see who is who, who were really subversive, who were just exuberant and following for the most part what many regarded as a fashion parade" (Williams 1972, 5).

Williams went on to justly, if harshly, ridicule the inconsistent press, the University radicals paid with public taxes, and the big businessmen seeking narrow self-interest in their opposition to state participation in the economy and the unemployment levy. He continued,

What we have to face here in this country and try to understand is the peculiarities of our national psychology. Whilst a few people make a big fuss in certain quarters about a Commission of Inquiry into a football fracas, nobody turns up for a Commission of Inquiry into a matter like the Postal Services on which there has been continuing agitation for years. They don't turn up for that matter for a Commission of Inquiry into the abuse of beauty contests on which complaint after complaint has been made over the years. A few agitate about the La Basse, and then when the Government seeks to stop rummaging at the La Basse sometimes the same people shed crocodile tears over the number of persons who make their living out of the La Basse. ...

There is loud-mouth agitation for Constitution Reform attacking the powers of the Prime Minister, challenging the constitutional provisions on the declaration of emergencies and the temporary suspension of human rights, calling for the abolition of the Senate or for giving the Senate greater powers and selecting its members differently, for the substitution of a Republic for the Monarchy, for the change in the powers of the position of the Governor-General, for all sorts of things. You appoint a Commission, nobody attends in any substantial numbers, and those who attend do so merely to use the Commission for their own party propaganda. (PNM 1972, 40-1)

Williams's frustration, expressed above, was perhaps aggravated in 1973 by the campaigning in the PNM party elections. From July to September 1973 Williams and Karl Hudson-Phillips were embroiled in a public exchange of sometimes heated words,

resulting in Hudson-Phillips's resignation from the Deputy Chairmanship of the PNM and from Cabinet on 12 September 1973 (Ryan 1989b, 11-5).²⁸

At the Fifteenth Annual PNM Party Convention on 28 September 1973, in which his term as Political Leader had ended, Williams (1973a, 1) announced that he had taken no steps to seek re-election, detailing in considerable length the frustrations prompting his decision.²⁹

Williams lamented that the Caribbean region had become weaker with Independence, rather than stronger, by providing tiny, weak states in which foreign governments or their armies, multinational corporations, and international criminals could operate. He was forced to accept that his vision of the integration of the entire Caribbean – Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanic, Dutch – “beyond any possibility of doubt ... [would] not be achieved in the foreseeable future” (Williams 1973a, 2).

In Trinidad and Tobago he deplored the persistent individualism and its attendant lack of perspective, indiscipline and irresponsibility:

When the PNM came on the scene in 1956, we encountered a society in which individualism was rampant, and this was best reflected in the large number of individual candidates for election or in the temporary coalition of a number of individuals to form a Party without a coherent programme. We set out deliberately to establish a disciplined Party with a coherent programme and to organise a national movement. Today, 17 years later, the disease of individualism is more pronounced than ever, and such national movement as there is does not go beyond the increased participation in Carnival and the general desire to migrate. Is there a polio epidemic? Irregardless, as you would

²⁸ Hudson-Phillips aggressively campaigned for a re-invigoration of the PNM, with what some considered a lack of regard for the party elders. At one point, he brashly declared, “who vex, vex” (Ryan 1989b, 12).

²⁹ At the September 1971 party convention, Williams had hinted that he might resign from the leadership of the party, provoking some distress (Kambon 1988, 259; Ryan 1989b, 3-4). See Parris (1981) for an analysis of events from September to December 1973.

say, the individual must be free to play his carnival. Is there an armed search for outlaws in the hills? Irregardless, the individual's hunting season must not be interfered with. Does the Government wish to protect your child by immunisation against communicable diseases? Irregardless, the parents must be free to ignore this or to leave it till the very last minute. (Williams 1973a, 13-4)

The list went on and on. This irresponsibility combined with "our own capacity for sensationalism and self-denigration" and a ready willingness to adopt an exaggerated sense of crises was most tragically reflected in the "guerrilla" movement, which had no clear enemy or programme, unlike the successful guerrilla movements in other places:

... It is not that the development is of no significance and can be treated casually. But one gets the distinct impression [of] exaggeration and ... aggravation especially at the level of political opposition forces. ...

... If, as I have read, the goal is to move the country from crippling dependence to true socialist independence and a 'drastic change in the economic system under which the country operates', I am not sure that those who preach this know what they mean, appreciate the results in other countries or can justify their claim that the road to all this is violence. (Williams 1973a, 16, 30)

The "peculiar national psychology" of dramatic complaint about a problem, equally vehement complaint about solutions proposed, the shiftless refusal to participate in formulating solutions, and the ready disregard for almost every existing, agreed upon, ordered, prioritised positive programme – whether it be in health, education, or economic transformation – in favour of unordered lobbying, entreaty, and intrigue particularly bothered him. He noted, "Exactly what the PNM laughed at unmercifully and condemned at its birth in 1956, to the plaudits of the population, the same population is now demanding and advocating" (Williams 1973a, 17-20).

Williams also bemoaned that he had been criticised for refusing to choose a successor:³⁰ "In many countries of the world, this decision of mine would be cause for the warmest commendation. Here in Trinidad it is the cause of condemnation. It is yet another indication of the extent to which the people themselves practise politics dominated by personalities" (Williams 1973a, 26).

The party, too, lacked direction in constitution reform, and refused to take seriously its 1956 pledge for morality in public affairs, including cleaning up instances of personal corruption and the ultimately divisive use of patronage³¹ (Williams 1973a, 20-26, 29, 31). Emphasising his own morality, Williams respectfully returned to the five donor governments the foreign awards conferred on him as Prime Minister, took vacation leave (for the first time in seventeen years) declared his assets to the Party Chairman (TT\$234,769, an extremely modest, and likely accurate figure), and made arrangements to purchase a private house to which he would retire with his daughter (Williams 1973a, 33-4; Ryan 1989b, 9).

Williams summarised,

One of America's more popular writers has recently written a book dealing with the American Virgin Islands in respect of tourism, in the course of which he pokes a lot of fun at the Virgin Island politicians. The title of the book is 'Don't Stop the Carnival.' For my own part I don't wish to stop the carnival I merely seek not to be caught up in it. (Williams 1973a, 34)

He suggested that 31 December 1973 would be the date of his departure, and that the party should choose its successor in the meanwhile (Ryan 1989b, 10).

³⁰ After the party's experience with previous Deputy Leaders Solomon and Robinson, three Deputy Leaders – Kamaluddin Mohammed, Errol Mahabir (cousin of Winston Mahabir), and George Chambers – were appointed at the Annual Convention of 1971 (Ghany 1996, 295).

The reaction in the country was characteristically mixed: some PNM party groups, the major Christian, Hindu and Muslim religious leaders (who had in 1970 formed the Inter-Religious Organisation [IRO]), the *Guardian* and the *Express* asked him to stay; other PNM party groups (notably organised around Hudson-Phillips), the DAC, Tapia, and the weekly tabloid *The Bomb*,³² accepted or even welcomed Williams's decision; and yet others expressed cynicism (in Ryan 1989b, 9-10, 16-7; Ghany 1996, 300-3; Pantin 1999). On 2 December 1973, Lloyd Best, leader of Tapia, argued that Williams's move had been a ploy to fool the gullible, to raise the ante, and to scare the cowards. He continued,

men who have had the rank to change the rules and bend the course of history do not go out like a squib [*sic*]. ... Williams is simply not going any place. ... Men of Williams's stature can only die in faith and hope, their gaze transfixed by wide horizons. ... To the practised poker-player it means that Williams is playing by the golden rule which says that the only card which counts is the last and final one. Stalin, goes the legend, dominated the table because, apart from anything else, he could wait forever. (quoted in Ryan 1989b, 16-7)

"Right Back To 1956": The PNM Against The Rest, 1973-81

From 7 October to 2 December 1973, the PNM took the necessary steps to elect a new Political Leader. On 9 October, Errol Mahabir indicated that he was not going to seek nomination, on 12 October Kamaluddin Mohammed wrote to the General Secretary, Nicholas Simonette, a letter stating that he would stand for election only if it was certain that Williams would not return. Mohammed ended up not signing any nomination papers. George Chambers's St. Ann's constituency group led efforts to persuade Williams to return. Only Karl Hudson-Phillips led a forceful campaign for

³¹ Susan Craig (1974) provides an excellent political sociological study of this phenomenon.

party leadership. On 18 November, the General Council received from the 476 Party Groups 224 nominations for Hudson-Phillips, 26 nominations for Mohammed, 9 invalid nominations, 40 messages with no nominations, and 177 non-responses (Ghany 1996, 300-4).³³

However, at the next meeting, on 2 December, a motion was passed to form a delegation to visit Williams to ask him to continue in office "at least until all necessary steps have been taken to implement the proposed new constitution for Trinidad and Tobago" with 348 in favour, 61 against, and 14 abstentions.³⁴ By 5:00 p.m. Williams had returned. Karl Hudson Phillips had criticised the action as did Irwin Merrit, Ferdi Ferreira (PNM foundation member) and Ivan Williams (Chairman of Dr. Williams's constituency organisation and head of a number of state organisations) – close confidants of Dr. Williams who had tried to dissuade him from delivering his initial resignation speech (Ghany 1996, 300-4; Ryan 1989b, 21-5).

In Williams's reply to the convention resolution asking him to stay on, he stressed that any new Prime Minister would have to seek a mandate from the voters "almost immediately." This would frustrate the process of constitutional reform, which was urgent. He added, "I have no desire, whatsoever, to hold on to what is called 'power'. I feel no attraction, whatsoever, for what is called the 'prestige of the office involved'.

³² After the appearance of the *Express* in May 1967, a popular weekly tabloid press flourished.

³³ At the same meeting, a resolution for the Party to form a delegation to visit Dr. Williams and ask him to return was defeated with a vote of thirty-four against, thirty-two in favour, and thirty-six abstentions.

³⁴ On 7 November, the IRO, through an approach to the Governor-General, Sir Ellis Clarke, had succeeded in arranging a meeting with Dr. Williams to ask him to reconsider his decision. At 2 December PNM General Council meeting it seems as though the Party Chairman had led an orchestrated return of Williams (Ghany 1996, 302-3).

Your resolution that I continue in office ... will disrupt my plans and interrupt my personal work" (Williams 1973d, 2).

In addition to the need for constitutional reform, Williams mentioned "world economic uncertainties." This likely referred to the Yom Kippur War which broke out on 6 October 1973, eight days after Williams's resignation speech. As an oil producer, Trinidad and Tobago would gain immensely. In January 1973 Amoco paid approximately US\$0.50 tax and royalty per barrel of oil; in December 1973 it was paying US\$4.69, and as new prices and taxes posted by Trinidad and Tobago took effect from 1 January 1974 this was practically to double again (Sutton 1984, 50). Williams must have recognised the possibilities available to the country under such circumstances. On 20 December 1973, Williams began a series of six radio and television broadcasts (continuing on 1 and 17 January, 14 February, 8 May, and 27 June) updating the country on international developments related to oil and the profound impact they might have on Trinidad, a tiny producer (Williams 1974a, 1974c, 1974d, 1974e).³⁵

By the time of the 1974 PNM Annual Convention Williams had revived his hopes, declaring, "We of the PNM find ourselves in 1974 on a development road that leads in a straight line right back to the People's Charter of 1956" (Williams 1974b, 39). The essential linkage of constitutional reform, West Indian unity, industrial development, the raising of social standards, and independence, proclaimed in the 1956 People's Charter and consistently pursued with each PNM administration, could be pursued in

³⁵ In 1973, Trinidad and Tobago produced 8.5 million tons of oil, 0.3 percent of world production (*BP statistical review* 1973, 6).

1974 in a way not possible before with the "heaven-sent opportunity arising out of the energy situation." Williams continued, "It may be said that we have had to wait a long time for this. ... We simply could not have done it before, the current was against us. We bought out Shell in 1974;³⁶ which of you here would say that we could have done it ten years before?" (Williams 1974b, 35). As ever, Williams also warned that foreign interference and Trinidad and Tobago's individualistic tendencies threatened any potential gains. He was confident, though, that the PNM could consolidate economic independence for Trinidad and Tobago, slowly but surely.

Around the same time, on 22 January 1974 the Constitutional Commission had reported to parliament.³⁷ After almost one year's discussion, the Commission's report and Draft Constitution together with a Minority report by Mitra Sinanan were laid in the House of Representatives in December 1974 by the Prime Minister. Over two sittings, on 13 and 17 December, Williams launched a seven-hour attack on the Commission's report (Ghany 1996, 339; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, 9; Ryan 1989b, 50, 55; Sutton 1984, 55). Perhaps the main point of disagreement was the Commission's recommendation of proportional representation.³⁸ Williams had opposed proportional representation in the 1970s with the same resolve as his opposition to communal representation in the 1950s and 1960s. In April 1973, Williams (1973c) had published in the Commonwealth journal, *The Round Table*, "Proportional Representation in Trinidad and Tobago: The Case Against," and the PNM had reprinted that same month a number of his articles

³⁶ The Government of Trinidad and Tobago purchased the local assets of Shell on 22 August 1974 at a cost of TT\$99.6 million (GOTT 1974).

³⁷ Selwyn Ryan (1989b, 33-50), a member of the Commission, compares in detail the Independence Constitution, the Commission's proposals, and the final 1976 Republican Constitution.

³⁸ A new single chamber was proposed, with thirty-six seats chosen by the first-past-the-post method, and another thirty-six elected by a proportional representation system.

and addresses in a booklet titled *PR: To Dissolve the Present PNM Majorities* (Williams 1973b). Williams rooted his argument in the understanding that the origins of proportional representations in Britain in 1857 was explicitly "to dissolve the present majority and to create all sort of minority parties" (PNM 1973, 6). It was the opposite of what Trinidad and Tobago needed. His basic argument was that proportional representation would create a weaker state. Earlier, in his resignation speech, Williams (1973a, 21) argued, "I believe, however, that in seeking to avoid the abuse of power by the executive, we should not fall into the equally dangerous error of reducing the effectiveness of the executive." In Trinidad and Tobago's political climate, the coalitions that would result from such a system would be disastrous, he argued, giving examples of the PNM inclusion of the PDP and the DLP members in Federal, foreign relations, and sports programmes in the 1950s and 1960s.

A Joint Select Committee of Parliament was established in 1975 to draft a new constitution, on 12 March 1976 its report was laid before the House of Representatives, and the Governor-General signed the proclamation on 1 August 1976. The Constitution provided for a Republic with a President replacing the Governor-General, the greater involvement of senators in the executive and legislative branches of government, the creation of an Integrity Commission, and in terms of elections, the lowering of the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen and the re-introduction of the ballot box. It had been fairly uncontroversial, although some Commissioners expressed dissatisfaction at the number of its most notable recommendations which were disregarded (Ryan 1989b, 42-50; Sutton 1984, 55-6; Ghany 1996, 339).

These two developments – the increase in oil prices and constitutional reform – provided the base for a strong economy and a strong government upon which Williams

could build a strong, independent Trinidad and Tobago state. In the first half of 1976, Williams wrote in a supplement to the *Washington Star*, an article entitled "Oil as the Basis of Economic Development and Political Stability," arguing,

Amid all the ferment in the Caribbean area, perhaps unprecedented in territorial scope, ideological content and political intensity, Trinidad and Tobago pursues the even tenor of its economic ways. The key to it all is its hydrocarbon resources. ...

... Trinidad and Tobago is even less dependent on tourism activities than it has previously been, and it has never relied on tourism to the extent of some of its Caribbean colleagues. ...

To the extent that our country can continue along its present lines of orthodox economic planning, subordinating ideological considerations to economic realities, non-interference with human rights and fundamental freedoms except in so far as obviously subversive activities are involved, maintenance of law and order without recourse to repression ... then it would be possible for our small country to be thankful for the small mercies which have come its way in the past two years. (reprinted in *TG* 4 April 1976, 12)

On 13 September 1976 the first proper general elections were held in ten years (if one discounts the 1971 elections with its boycott, 26 percent turnout, and No-Vote campaign). Eleven political parties along with five independents put up a total of 269 candidates, approximately fifteen for every two seats (see Table 4-3). More than a year before the elections, on 3 October 1975 Williams (1975, 13) remarked in his speech to the PNM Annual Convention, "If economically '56 is virtually prehistory in '75, psychologically and politically we are back in '56 all over again."³⁹

³⁹ Ryan (1989b, 56-137) extensively discusses the parties, programmes, strategies and debates in the 1976 campaign. Ryan, Greene, and Harewood (1979) and Ryan (1979) particularly note the confusion surrounding that year's elections.

Table 4-3. Election Statistics, 1976 General Elections

	Number of Candidate s	Number of Seats Won	Number of Votes	% of Total Votes Cast
PNM	36	24	169,194	53.6%
ULF	26	10	84,870	26.9%
DAC	36	2	25,586	8.1%
Tapia House	29	0	12,021	3.8%
Democratic Liberation Party	35	0	9,404	3.0%
Social Democratic Labour Party	34	0	5,928	1.9%
Independents	5	0	1,692	0.5%
West Indian National Party	26	0	1,242	0.4%
Liberation Action Party	19	0	872	0.3%
United Freedom Party	21	0	1,047	0.3%
National Trinidad and Tobago Party	1	0	115	0.0%
Young People's National Party	1	0	104	0.0%
Rejected Ballots			3,824	1.2%
TOTALS	269	36	315,809	100.0%

Source: GORTT (1977, 149-51)

As in 1956, all political parties except the PNM were fluid. The Democratic Action Congress (DAC) and the United Labour Front (ULF) attempted a merger, and Vernon Jamadar had invited James Millette and later ANR Robinson to lead the Social Democratic Labour Party, but the efforts were unsuccessful (Ryan 1989b, 107-9). Besides the PNM, only three parties – the ULF, DAC, and Tapia – lasted long enough to contest the general elections in 1981, after which they dissolved.

The old DLP had split into two factions. The first was the Democratic Liberation Party, the new name given to the party that remained after Alloy Lequay beat Vernon Jamadar in the December 1972 party elections. In 1976, members of the Lequay faction were appointed Opposition Senators by the UPP. By the 1976 elections, Simbhoonath Capildeo took over leadership of the party. In December 1973, after an unsuccessful court battle over the right to use the DLP symbol, Vernon Jamadar established the

Social Democratic Liberation Party (Ryan 1989b, 57-8). After sixteen years of decay, the DLP had finally died.

ANR Robinson led the DAC, which had evolved from the ACDC after its split with the DLP in 1971. Tapia became involved in conventional politics through the appointment by the UPP of Tapia members, including Lloyd Best, as Opposition Senators between October 1974 and February 1976 (Ryan 1989b, 96). Though quite different in character, both the DAC and Tapia could be considered reformist in nature, with some radical liberal positions.

The newest political presence was the ULF. The group was formed on 18 February 1975 at a rally of the radical trade unions OWTU, ATS&GWTU, TIWU, and the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association (TICFA) in Skinner Park, San Fernando (Baptiste 1976, 9-10). TICFA was formed by Raffique Shah, one of the leaders of the 1970 Teteron mutiny.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, in the ATS&GWTU, the death of Bhadase Maraj on 21 October 1971 left a leadership void in the Indian-dominated sugar union. After over a year of sometimes harsh rivalry, in May 1973 Basdeo Panday had taken control of the union (*Master and servant* 1991, 48; Siewah and Moonilal 1991, xvi).⁴¹ George Weekes and Joe Young of the OWTU and TIWU continued to be active in the radical section of labour movement.

⁴⁰ Shah and seventeen other mutineers had been pardoned on 27 July 1972 as a result of a Court of Appeal judgement that the soldiers' court martials were defective. The Privy Council's refusal to grant leave to Attorney-General Karl Hudson-Phillips to appeal the decision led to the government's abandonment of the case (*Trinidad Express* 27 July 1972, 1, 14). On his release, Shah announced his intentions to get involved in radical politics, and on 14 February 1973 he assumed leadership of TICFA (*Trinidad Express* 15 February 1973, 1).

⁴¹ In 1965 Panday had been appointed legal advisor to the OWTU, in 1966 the WFP candidate for Naparima South, and in 1972 an Opposition Senator by the UPP (Baptiste 1976, 195; GOTT 1967, 89; Ghany 1996, 280).

On 28 March 1976, after some debate on the merits of conventional political involvement, the ULF was launched as a political party (Ryan 1989b, 75). Its focus was class-based but it did not attach itself to any particular ideology. The party included in its membership many fringe radical political groups such as the United National Independence Party led by James Millette, the New Beginning Movement, the National Movement for the True Independence of Trinidad and Tobago, the National Liberation Movement, Students for Change, the Union of Democratic Students, the United Revolutionary Organisation, and the (demilitarised) NUFF (Ryan 1989b, 81-2). The party had not made clear who was its Political Leader. It preached collective leadership, Panday had emerged as the natural leader, yet it was decided that should the party win the election, the Prime Minister would be labour lawyer Allan Alexander – who lost his seat in Point Fortin to Cyril Rogers of the PNM by a vote of 5,802 to 2,580 (GOTT 1977, 167; Ryan 1989b, 79, 113, 139; Kiely 1996, 139-40).

Perhaps the most unexpected aspect of the 1976 elections was Dr. Williams's odd, perhaps shrewd, campaign for the PNM. On 12 May 1976, he had rebuked the PNM membership and its General Secretary, Nicholas Simonette, for not understanding that the "majority of PNM incumbents" would be unacceptable to the electorate, who had showed its "total indifference to the traditional electioneering and its disdain for political parties" (*TG* 26 May 1976, 8). Williams called the antics of the party's political aspirants "simply pathetic," and declared that he had

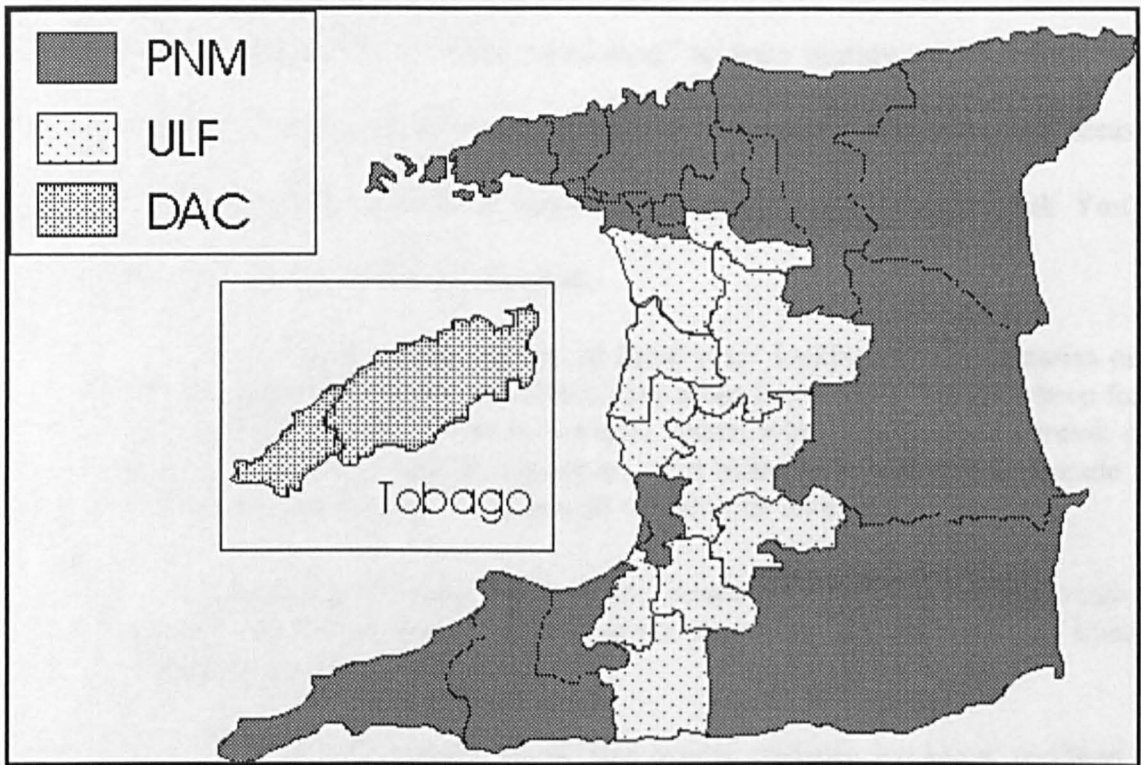
not the slightest intention of encumbering himself, yet again, with these traditional party millstones, unable to speak properly, knowing nothing of basic issues facing country and world, incapable for higher responsibilities which ultimately fall on the Political Leader's shoulders, unable – unbelievable though it sounds – even to seek to assist their constituents in difficulty who further turn to the Political Leader and interfere with his attention to his formal, public, national responsibilities. (*TG* 26 May 1976)

Williams called for more women and more young people on the party's slate, and chastised the party for ignoring his request that it enforce public declarations of assets by all MPs, Cabinet Ministers, Statutory Board, and Public Servants and State Board members higher than the grade of Administrative Officer V along with their families. He demanded that all MPs submit a dated and signed letter to authorise payment of 7½ percent of their salaries to the Party Secretary and another undated and signed letter of resignation addressed to the Speaker of the House of Representatives to be given to the Political Leader.

The speech riled some party members. In Woodford Square on 5 July Hudson-Phillips, Ferreira, and Simonette organised a meeting criticising Williams's latest move. In the end, the five ex-Ministers whom Williams called "millstones" were retained by the party, but Williams refused to speak on their campaign platforms (Ghany 1996, 340-1; Ryan 1989b, 89-91).⁴²

Despite the new personalities and unorthodox campaigns of 1976, the election result did not depart radically from that of 1966. Most notable had been the DAC's victory in Tobago. But even with this loss, the PNM retained a two-thirds majority, holding on to areas in eastern and southern Trinidad, where it was unsuccessful in 1966 (see Figure 4-3).

⁴² At the end of July, the Party waived disciplinary action against the three critics in light of the coming general elections.

Figure 4-3. Distribution of Constituencies by Party, 1976 General Elections

Created by the author from GORTT (1977)

As in 1966, the increase in candidates had been accompanied by a decrease in voters. The turnout rate was only 56 percent, significantly lower than the rates in all other general elections, except those held in 1971 and 1946 (see Table 4-4 and Table 4-5).⁴³

Table 4-4. Voter Turnout Rates at General and Federal Elections, 1946-76

1946	1950	1956	1958	1961	1966	1971	1976
52.9%	70.0%	80.0%	73.6%	88.1%	65.8%	26.1%	55.8%

Sources: Malik (1971, 121), GOTT (1965, 1967, 1972b), GORTT (1977)

Table 4-5. Number of Ballots Cast in General Elections, 1956-76

1956	1961	1966	1971	1976
271,534	333,512	302,548	118,597	315,809

Sources: Ryan (1972, 164), GOTT (1965, 1967, 1972b), GORTT (1977)

⁴³ Williams (1976, 38) had understood this as an unfortunately common global trend resulting from increased competition for the allegiances and interest of voters, increasingly endowed with shorter working weeks and more disposable income, faced with the massive expansion of entertainment, sport, culture, and, most of all, television.

By 1966, Williams had decisively defeated the old politicians. Ten years later, after trade union radicalism, a Black Power "revolution," an army mutiny, a nation-wide no-vote campaign, the emergence of young, new political personalities, parties, and ideas, the PNM maintained the two-thirds majority it secured 1961. In his "Thank You" speech after the elections Williams remarked,

I was rather surprised after all these years looking at commentaries on elections and what people say and don't say when I read that if it hadn't been for – what was it? – a particular motorcade, where, whatever it was, wherever it came from or where the hell it went to – if it hadn't been for that motorcade I wouldn't be here tonight.⁴⁴ And you all wouldn't be here.

I don't know where the devil you would be, following the motorcade, wherever the hell it went to. There is no accounting for the views of these commentators, etc.

So at once I looked at the election results, statistics and so on; and then I looked at the obvious thing.

We are the only party, my dear friends. I keep telling you this, you know this as well as I. Let's say it once more. Some day it is going to get into the hard heads of these commentators. PNM is the only party in the Caribbean which has uniformly controlled the capital city of the country. (*TG* 26 September 1976, 3)

Williams lampooned the opposition's showing at the polls, their campaigns, and their excuses. He regretted that the PNM weren't tested more, adding

It would have been nice to see what would've happened if people could have had the opportunity to vote. ...

[Referring to Lloyd Best:] You have to use a little imagination in terms of size and all the rest of that. ... You run about the place here saying for 15 years, especially in the last 5 years, you say PNM this, PNM that, PNM the other, PNM doing that.

And then when you finish all you could say is because of a motorcade people get afraid and turned to the very party that took care of them for 5 years

⁴⁴ Both Selwyn Ryan (1989b, 121-2) and Lloyd Best (in Ryan 1989b, 122-5) argued that the ULF motorcade in north Trinidad two weeks before the elections changed the minds of Afro-Trinidadians at the last minute, inspiring racial voting for the PNM to keep the Indians in the ULF out of office.

and more. What the hell you think the voters of Trinidad and Tobago are? (TG 26 September 1976, 4)

Two local government elections, in April 1977 and on 21 April 1980, were fought during this term of office, and their results emphasised the PNM's dominance in the political scene (see Table 4-6 and Table 4-7) (GORTT [1978]; GORTT [1981b]; Ryan 1989b, 166; Sutton 1984, 68).

Table 4-6. Election Statistics, 1977 Local Government Elections

	Number of candidates	Number of seats won	Total Number of Votes	% of Total Votes Cast
PNM	100	67	64,725	51.1%
ULF	56	29	47,899	37.8%
DAC	28	4	8,304	6.6%
Independent	11	0	2,987	2.4%
DLP	5	0	1,456	1.2%
Tapia	2	0	383	0.3%

Source: GORTT ([1978])

Table 4-7. Election Statistics, 1980 Local Government Elections

	Number of candidates	Number of seats won	Total Number of Votes	% of Total Votes Cast
PNM	113	100	74,667	57.8%
ULF	53	9	41,167	31.9%
Independent	27	4	9,827	7.6%
Point Fortin Vigilante Welfare Group	6	0	1,627	1.3%
Tapia	2	0	528	0.4%

Source: GORTT ([1980b])

In 1977, the PNM were uncontested in twenty-five seats; in 1980 the number of uncontested seats rose to thirty-one (GORTT [1978]; GORTT [1981b]).⁴⁵ In 1980 all municipal and county councils were controlled by the PNM.

⁴⁵ The voter turnout rates were extremely low, 22 percent in 1977 and 20 percent in 1980.

Williams's last term in office also witnessed a remarkable economic transformation, occasioned by the rise in oil prices (see Table 4-8).

Table 4-8. Selected Economic Indicators, 1970-80

	1970	1980
Crude Oil Prices (US\$/barrel)	US\$1.30	US\$28.70
Total Revenue (TT\$ million)	TT\$317.5	TT\$6,226.4
Total Expenditure (TT\$ million)	TT\$390.1	TT\$5,446.3
Capital Expenditure (as % of Total Expenditure)	28.1%	42.8%
GDP at Constant 1970 Prices (TT\$ million)	TT\$1,643.7	TT\$2,748.4
Gross Capital Formation (as % of GDP at Constant 1970 Prices)	25.9%	64.6%
Government Expenditure (as % of GDP at Constant 1970 Prices)	13.1%	21.1%
Net Official Foreign Reserves (TT\$ million)	TT\$106.6	TT\$6,336.7
Unemployment Rate	12.8%	9.9%

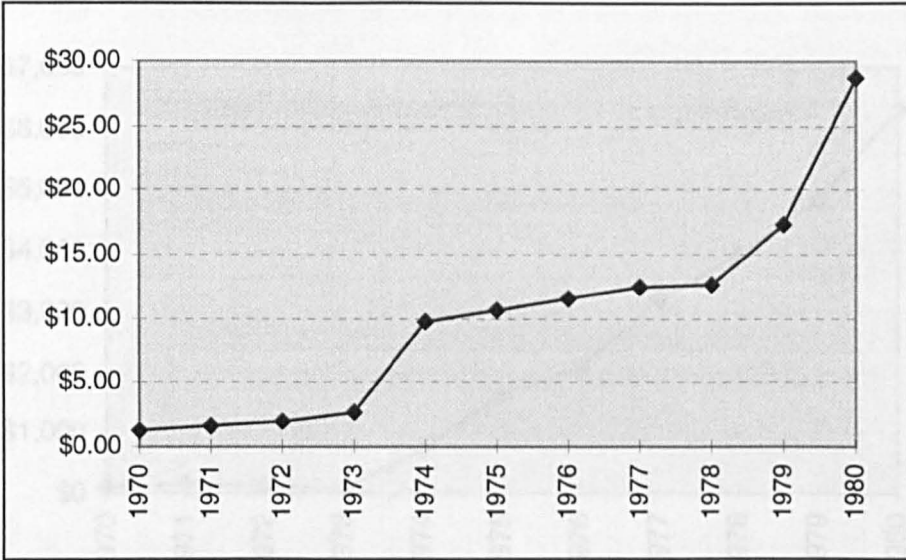
Source: CBTT (1993)

Figure 4-5. Governmental Revenues, 1970-80 (TT\$ mil)

Between 1970 and 1980, the price per barrel of oil had risen over twenty-two times to US\$28.70 (see Figure 4-4). Government revenues rose accordingly, almost twenty times to TT\$6,226.4 million (see Figure 4-5). Incredibly, net official foreign reserves expanded from its low point in 1973 to nearly one hundred times that level in 1980, from TT\$67.1 million to TT\$6,336.7 million (see Figure 4-6). With these developments, real GDP had risen by over two thirds during the period, at a rate of 5.3 percent per annum, from TT\$1,643.7 million in 1970 to TT\$2,748.4 million in 1980 (see Figure 4-7). In the 1978 Budget, presented in December 1977, Williams declared, "The Trinidad and Tobago Government is a billionaire" (Ryan 1989b, 204-5).⁴⁶

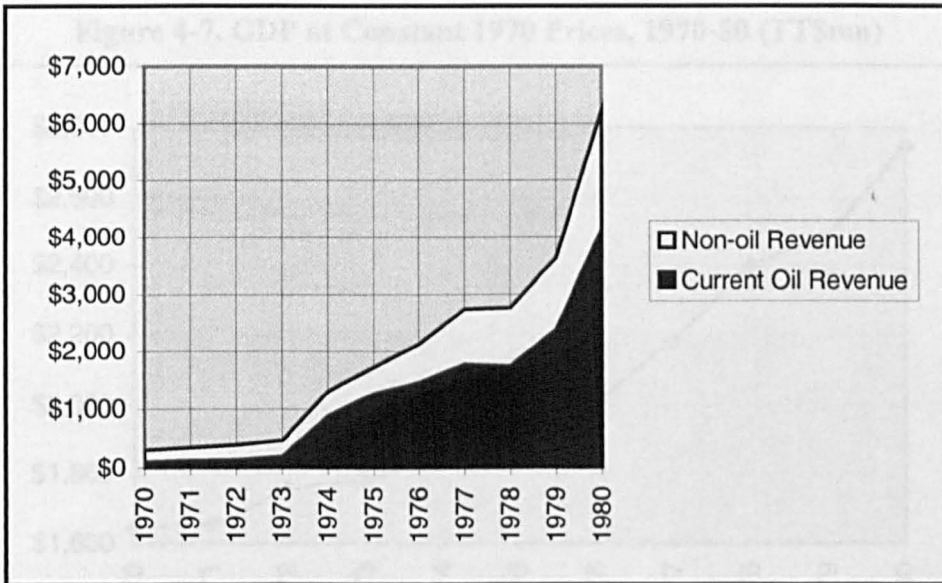
⁴⁶ Williams is widely alleged also to have boasted during the period, "Money is no problem" (MacDonald 1986, 191).

Figure 4-4. Crude Prices Per Barrel, 1970-1980 (US\$)



Created by author from CBTT (1993)

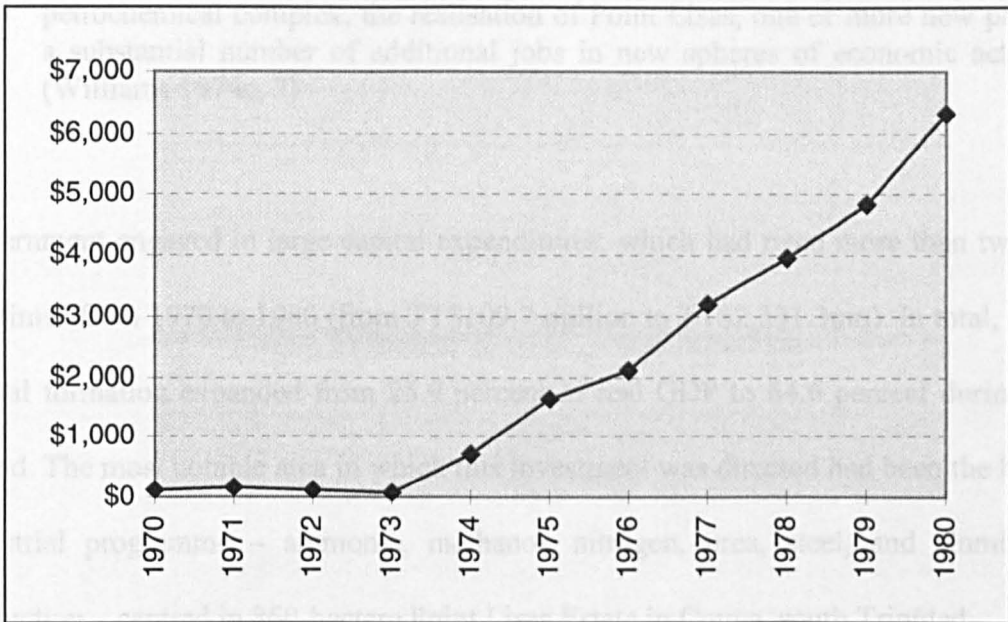
Figure 4-5. Government Revenues, 1970-80 (TT\$mn)



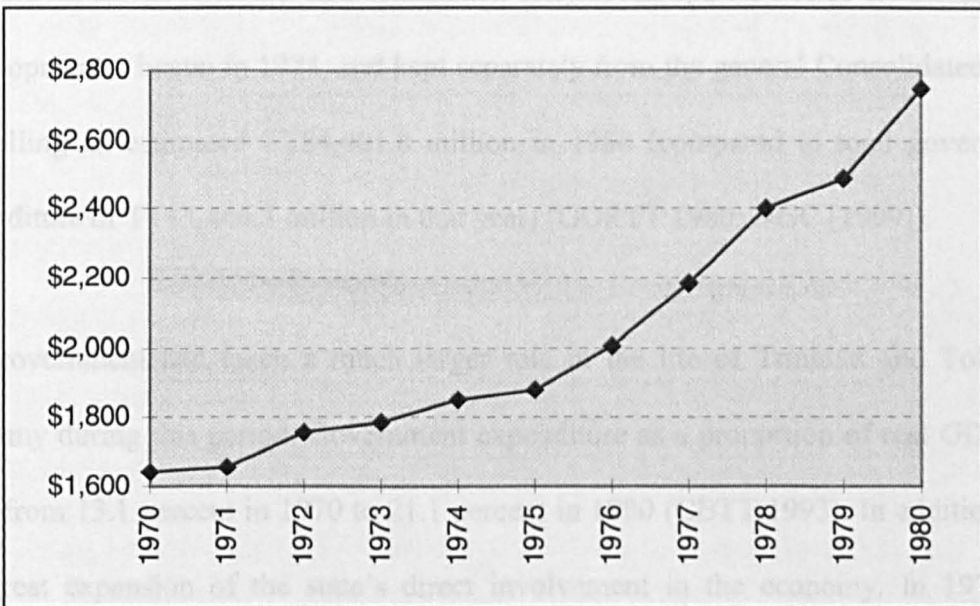
Created by author from CBTT (1993)

With these increased revenues government expenditure doubled, from TT\$390.1 million in 1970 to TT\$5,446.3 million in 1980, almost fourteen times. Wilkins stressed that the windfall should be used productively. As early as in his 1 January 1974 radio and television broadcast, he stressed,

we must not behave as if we just have a windfall. We must use the additional revenue to accelerate the restructuring of our economy. We must have

Figure 4-6. Net Official Foreign Reserves, 1970-80 (TT\$mnn)

Created by author from CBTT (1993)

Figure 4-7. GDP at Constant 1970 Prices, 1970-80 (TT\$mnn)

Created by author from CBTT (1993)

With these increased revenues government expenditure climbed, from TT\$390.1 million in 1970 to TT\$5,446.3 million in 1980, almost fourteen times. Williams stressed that the windfall should be used productively. As early as in his 1 January 1974 radio and television broadcast, he stressed,

we must not behave as if we just have a windfall. We must use the additional revenue to accelerate the restructuring of our economy. We must have

something concrete and tangible to show when the crisis is all over – a new petrochemical complex, the realisation of Point Lisas, one or more new planes, a substantial number of additional jobs in new spheres of economic activity. (Williams 1974c, 7)

Government engaged in large capital expenditures, which had risen more than twenty-one times from 1970 to 1980 (from TT\$109.7 million to TT\$2,331.3mn). In total, gross capital formation expanded from 25.9 percent of real GDP to 64.6 percent during the period. The most notable area in which this investment was directed had been the heavy industrial programme – ammonia, methanol, nitrogen, urea, steel, and aluminium production – centred in 860-hectare Point Lisas Estate in Couva, south Trinidad.

In addition, the government had established forty-seven special Funds for Long-Term Development – begun in 1974, and kept separately from the general Consolidated Fund – totalling an estimated TT\$4,401.8 million in 1980 (compared to total government expenditure of TT\$5,446.3 million in that year) (GORTT 1980; NGC [1999]).

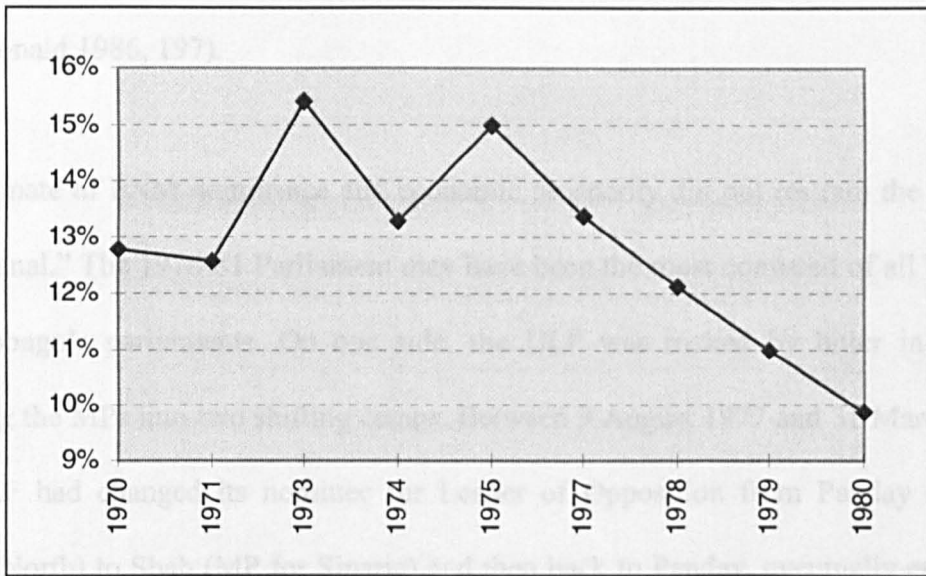
The government had taken a much larger role in the life of Trinidad and Tobago's economy during this period. Government expenditure as a proportion of real GDP had risen from 13.1 percent in 1970 to 21.1 percent in 1980 (CBTT 1993). In addition was the great expansion of the state's direct involvement in the economy. In 1972 the Trinidad and Tobago Government held shares in thirty-five companies, with a book value of TT\$82mn. By 1983, the value of its portfolio had risen to TT\$2,000 million in sixty-six companies, which included holding companies; manufacturing companies in such varied fields as agri-products, metals, fertilisers and petroleum products; and service companies offering financial, management (hospitals), maintenance (schools),

road building (secondary roads), real estate and solid waste disposal expertise (GORTT 1983, 158; GORTT 1995, 7; Sargeant and Forde 1991, 8).

The strong economy had been combined with what some observers have called the development of a "presidential" style of rule, not only in personal predisposition, but through the powers granted in both the Independence and Republican Constitution, which gave the Prime Minister veto over the appointments of over two hundred heads and deputy heads in the Civil Service (Gocking 1998, 61-66; Sutton 1984, 64-5; Ryan 1989b, 228-9).⁴⁷ This combination seemed to embolden Williams to more aggressively defend, even assert, the State's independence in the face of foreign governments, multinational companies, the trade union movement, the radical left, and the local private sector, each time in the name of the small citizens of Trinidad and Tobago (Ryan 1989b, 198-242).

For the general population, the material standard of living undoubtedly rose during the period. Real average weekly earnings rose 22.8 percent between 1971 and 1980, beating the overall price increase of 328 percent over the same period (CBTT 1993). Most importantly, unemployment – one of the country's most intractable economic problems – had fallen from a high of 15.4 percent in 1973 to 9.9 percent in 1980, the lowest recorded rate in Trinidad and Tobago's history, and the first time that the rate fell below 10 percent (see Figure 4-8).

⁴⁷ Sutton (1984, 57-8) described the situation as like a "renaissance court" with everyone watching everybody else.

Figure 4-8. Unemployment, 1970-80

Created by author from CBTT (1993)

Note: data unavailable for 1972 and 1976

With the general prosperity came much extravagance, illustrated by the numerous stories of weekend shopping flights to Miami, and so on. Imports during the period had risen from TT\$684.9 million to TT\$2,380.4 million in constant 1970 prices, or from 41.7 percent to 86.6 percent of real GDP (CBTT 1993). MacDonald (1986, 190-5) has spoken of a process of "middle classisation," with the *Times* (London) in 1978 remarking on the country's consumer "revolution," and *Business Latin America*, commenting in 1980 that "Trinidadians seem to have an unlimited appetite for consumer goods."⁴⁸ One of the political results of this exuberance was an increase in corruption. The most notable allegation was the "DC-9" scandal, erupting in July 1980 and involving John O'Halloran, one of the local white PNM Ministers who resigned in

⁴⁸ In 1960 Naipaul (1981, 1995a), however, had noted the modern consumerism of Trinidadians as a fundamental national trait, while the account provided by Brereton (1981, 191-2, 219-20) of the "American Occupation" in the 1940s, and the 8.5 percent per annum growth in real GDP from 1951 to 1961 – both as a result of Trinidad's oil – suggests that Trinidad had developed these orientations at least thirty years before the boom of the 1970s.

the aftermath of the Black Power marches, by then employed in the state sector (MacDonald 1986, 197).

The climate of PNM dominance and economic prosperity did not restrain the political "bacchanal." The 1976-81 Parliament may have been the most confused of all Trinidad and Tobago's parliaments. On one side, the ULF was rocked by bitter in-fighting dividing the MPs into two shifting camps. Between 9 August 1977 and 31 March 1978, the ULF had changed its nominee for Leader of Opposition from Panday (MP for Couva North) to Shah (MP for Siparia) and then back to Panday, eventually ending up with Panday's faction outnumbering and decisively defeating Shah's supporters through a local government by-election on 26 September 1978 in Siparia – by a vote of 1,591 to 185 (Ryan 1989b, 166; Ghany 1996, 347-8; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, 30-31).⁴⁹ The two DAC MPs split as well, with Dr. Winston Murray (MP for Tobago West) suspended from the party at the end of March 1978 (Ryan 1989b, 191).

Meanwhile, also on 31 March 1978, Hector McLean, PNM MP for Arouca and Minister of Works, Transport, and Communications, had crossed the floor to the opposition benches, declaring that he would not resign his seat despite attempts to claim otherwise via his undated signed letter (Ghany 1996, 347-8). With the loss of the PNM MP, this led to speculation that the five "millstones" – who had not been appointed to any Ministerial positions – might also resign, splitting parliament between the PNM and the rest of the opposition, eighteen seats on each side. The PNM had hurriedly drafted a constitutional amendment compelling members of parliament to

⁴⁹ Ryan (1989b, 138-197; Ryan 1978, 242-364) provides detailed accounts of the extensive and extreme ULF factionalism, with sections written by Richard Jacobs, UWI academic and defeated ULF candidate for Arouca in the 1976 General Elections.

vacate their seats if they should resign or be expelled from his party, with Williams securing the cooperation of Panday in drafting the proposed amendment. McLean and the Tobago members joined with the four Shah supporters in early April, asking the President to remove Panday from the Leadership of Opposition once more. Their request had been dismissed because of the members' disagreement on naming a replacement. The constitutional amendment was passed at the end of April, but had not been used (Ghany 1996, 346-8; Ryan 1989b, 157-9).

Further disruption occurred in the PNM with the suspension of Karl Hudson-Phillips and Ferdi Ferreira from the party in March 1980, after they had publicly criticised Williams's 1979 Annual Convention address as "totally irrelevant." On 19 April 1980, two days before the local government elections, Hudson-Phillips launched the Organisation of National Reconstruction (ONR), involving such former PNM members as Ferreira and former PNM General Secretary Nicholas Simonette. Attacks on corruption and inefficiency had been among the ONR's strongest platforms and Hudson-Phillips was formally expelled from the PNM. The ONR was subsequently launched as a political party on 30 November 1980 and held its inaugural meeting on 1 February 1981. On March 15 1981 an opinion poll conducted by Selwyn Ryan's St. Augustine Research Associates (SARA) had indicated that the ONR's support exceeded that of the PNM by one percentage point (twenty-nine percent to twenty-eight percent) (Sutton 1984, 65, 68; Ryan 1989b, 247, MacDonald 1986, 204; Hudson-Phillips 1981).

At the same time the PNM had lost its hold on Tobago. Though the issue of secession was raised, all candidates advocating independence lost their deposits in the 1976 elections (Ryan 1989b, 133-4). Tobagonians were not willing to proclaim independence, but they desired more autonomy. In his 1976 post-election "Thank You"

speech, Williams's bitterness and indignation were only barely hidden by his dismissive attitude:

Nothing new and nothing much. ... It is part of a general malaise over the world, ... part of a particular Caribbean madness resulting from all the flotsam and jetsam brought to the Caribbean over a century.

They want to go of on their own small island, ... I am not one to bother.

... I said it in Tobago, 'If you want to go, go. We are not holding you. I am not going to send any Coast Guard or ship or army there to hold them back. What for? They want to go, go!' ...

It's a financial matter; what terms do we agree on without bitterness, without any emotion? All they have to tell me is what it is they want and how to do it. I appoint somebody to do it. I have more important things to do. (*TG* 26 September 1976, 10)

In January 1977, ANR Robinson, DAC MP for Tobago East, moved a resolution calling for "internal self-government" for Tobago.⁵⁰ On 11 February 1977 the House unanimously agreed to an amended version of the resolution and a Joint Select Committee had been established to consider the question (Ghany 1996, 358-9; Davidson 1979, 176). During the local government elections of April 1977, the PNM secured control of the Tobago County Council by winning seven seats against the DAC's four (GORTT [1978]). In July of the following year the Committee's report, cited as House Paper No. 6 of 1978, was submitted and ratified by both Houses of Parliament that same month. It was not until November 1979 that the legislation drafted by Senior Counsel Lionel Seemungal was submitted. Further delay occurred as the PNM government claimed that Seemungal had gone beyond his brief leaving Parliament but two options: to reject the proposals or grant full independence to Tobago. In early 1980, a re-drafted Tobago (Internal Self-Government) Bill was

published for public comment. On 12 September 1980 the Bill was debated in the House of Representatives; Robinson voted against the bill and the ULF walked out. The Bill was passed with the support of Tobago West MP, Winston Murray. As enacted it provided for a fifteen-member (twelve elected and three appointed) Tobago House of Assembly (THA) charged with implementing in Tobago government policy in respect of finance, economic planning and development, and the provision of various local services (Sutton [1985?], 4-5; Ghany 1996, 358-9).

The THA's first elections, held on 24 November 1980, brought out 63 percent of the registered electorate, with the DAC receiving support from Panday's ULF faction and Tapia, who were brought together in September-October 1980 by the San Fernando-based Borough Action Team, chaired by Alloy Lequay⁵¹ (MacDonald 1986, 196; Lequay 1999; Siewah 1994, 476-7; Harris 1991, 42; Ryan 1989a, 42). The DAC defeated the PNM eight to four and ANR Robinson, who had resigned his parliamentary seat to contest the Tobago elections,⁵² was installed as the THA's first Chairman (GORTT 1981a).⁵³

In addition, critics continued to maintain that the PNM, Williams, and "the system" had lost any legitimacy it once may have had. UWI political scientist Carl Parris (1983a, 174), for example, pointed to the fact that between June 1973 and December 1979, no

⁵⁰ Davidson (1979) provides the illuminating debates in the House on the issue.

⁵¹ The ONR, the Shah faction of the ULF, and NJAC declined to join the emerging coalition.

⁵² The Tobago (Internal Self-Government) Act stipulated that members of the Senate and House of Representatives were barred from belonging to the THA (Sutton [1985?], 5).

⁵³ The DAC splinter group, the Fargo House Movement, led by Winston Murray (the other MP elected to the House of Representatives on a DAC ticket) had campaigned for secession and lost its deposit (MacDonald 1986, 196-7).

fewer than eleven Commissions of Inquiry were conducted.⁵⁴ In addition, nurses and teachers, who "belonged to that faction of organised labour which earlier was labelled as conservative [i.e. PNM supporters]" had begun to march against the government (Parris 1983a, 187).

Williams did not seem perturbed by these developments. On 25 January 1981, he delivered the feature address at the PNM's Twenty-Fifth Anniversary celebration. In the speech, Dr. Williams noted the steady social, economic and political progress made by the PNM on the one hand, and the constant, irresponsible criticism of its various political opponents on the other. He retorted,

To say that nothing has been done in over 25 years and five general elections suggests that something, at least one thing, does work – PNM's appeal to the electorate. ...

... here we stand after 25 years, to report on our stewardship, to establish our readiness and fitness to continue the struggle on which we embarked 25 years ago, then as now against the rest, then as now with powerful vested interests against us, then as now with the mightiest force in the country in our support, ready to go at the word of command, keeping our powder dry until we see the whites of their eyes, confident in the continued support of the Lord God of Hosts who will rule, as he has ruled so often in our 25 years, Great is the PNM and it will continue to prevail. (Williams 1981, 2, 34)

Williams died exactly nine weeks later, unexpectedly, from a diabetic coma of which few people were aware.

For twenty-five years, through a combination of skill, determination, and fortune, Williams and the PNM consistently prevailed over the disorder of Trinidad and Tobago politics, both within parliament and outside of it. This would not be repeated in the

⁵⁴ These were almost all concerned with administrative matters.

remainder of the century. While the PNM under Williams was able to consistently emerge on top of the anarchic opposition, it was never able to bring a fundamental order to the conduct of politics in the country, which, it could be argued, was the goal of William's project of Political Education, Nationalism, and Morality in Public Affairs. Within this limitation, however, Williams had achieved a significant measure of what he had set out to do, leading Trinidad and Tobago through significant political, social, and economic transformation, which included the establishment of a Republican and liberal-democratic constitution, widespread free public education, heavy industrial development, and a greatly increased standard of living, all within a relatively peaceful and free social and political environment. A relatively strong, independent Trinidad and Tobago state had been created, particularly after the oil shocks and constitutional reform exercise of the 1970s. Williams's death would provide a test for the country to see whether such progress as had undoubtedly occurred under his rule could be sustained or improved.

PART II

**PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE NATIONAL
ALLIANCE FOR RECONSTRUCTION, 1981-91**

CHAPTER 5

"ALL AH WE TIEF": THE FALL OF THE PNM, 1981-6

In this chapter, we look at the performance of the Chambers administration (1981-6) which ended in the first defeat in a general elections for the PNM. George Chambers was faced with three major challenges in office: succeeding a charismatic political icon who had mastered the Trinidad and Tobago political environment, managing a 55.2 percent drop in oil prices from 1982 to 1986, and fighting off a newly invigorated and consolidated political opposition. He failed all three.

"What Is Wrong Must Be Put Right": Prime Minister George Chambers and the General Elections of 1981

On 29 March 1981, exactly nine weeks after PNM had celebrated its Silver Jubilee, and two weeks after the publication of the SARA poll which had indicated the ONR's slight lead over the PNM, at approximately 8:00 p.m. Eric Williams died in his home, unexpectedly, from a diabetic coma. At 10:00 p.m., after a meeting at his home with the PNM Party Chairman (Francis Prevat) and the three Deputy Leaders (Kamaluddin

Mohammed, Errol Mahabir, and George Chambers), President Sir Ellis Clarke decided that Chambers would be appointed as Williams's successor.¹

A special meeting of the House of Representatives was called the next day, on Monday 30 March 1981, and at 3:00 p.m. George Chambers – Member of Parliament for St. Ann's since 1966; Minister of Agriculture, Lands, and Fisheries; and Minister of Industry and Commerce – was sworn in as Prime Minister. Chambers delivered on television that evening his first address as Prime Minister. He informed the country that all Ministers would retain their portfolios and that Cabinet and Parliament had met as usual, noting the significance of these "acts of continuity. ... As the late Prime Minister himself would have wanted it, the ship of state sails steadily on course" (Ghany 1996, 403-4).

On 9 May, Chambers was elected as political leader of the PNM without opposition. In his acceptance speech at the Chaguaramas Convention Centre, Chambers announced a Cabinet reshuffle, as well as a halt to the Caroni Racing Complex and the Malabar Housing Project, two public works projects that had been surrounded by controversy.² Chambers declared, "What is right in the country must be kept right. What is wrong

¹ Ghany (1996, 376-401) and Ryan (1989b, 243-257) give accounts of the controversies surrounding the causes of Williams's death, the handling of the announcement, and the appointment of his successor. The most enduring controversy has surrounded whether President Clarke appointed the low-profile George Chambers over his senior and Leader of the House, Kamaluddin Mohammed, on racial grounds. On 20 November 1995 (two weeks after the general elections that made Basdeo Panday the country's first Indian prime minister) until 27 April 1996, this issue was openly discussed for the first time in television, radio, and print media via interviews with and statements by Clarke, Errol Mahabir, and Mohammed (Ghany 1996, 376-387). In the *Trinidad Guardian* (1 September 1999, 5) in an Independence Day interview, Mohammed had been quoted, "I should have been the Prime Minister after Williams died. Today this nation would not have been burdened with the racial situation as it is now."

² A key figure in these scandals had been John O'Halloran, local white businessman, one of the few persons close enough to Williams to be aware of his diabetic condition, and one of the three Ministers of Government who resigned in the aftermath of the Black Power marches. On 5 May, four days before the PNM convention, O'Halloran had resigned as Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority under contentious circumstances (Ghany 1996, 407-8).

must be put right." Chambers responded positively to the charges against the government of corruption, on which the ONR had capitalised greatly (Ghany 1996, 405-8).

Parliament dissolved on 24 September 1981, and general elections were called for 9 November.³ The elections were perceived by many to be a battle between the ONR and the PNM, although there were at least three other serious parties contesting. The ONR was seen by many to be a party of French Creoles and big businessmen, much like the POPPG (whose president, Henry Hudson-Phillips, was Karl Hudson-Phillips's father) in 1956 and the Liberals in 1966, but with a strong law and order tendency, distasteful to a large section of the population (Ryan 1989b, 259-67). Following the style of Hudson-Phillips's splashy PNM election campaign of 1973,⁴ the ONR hired Sabo Associates, the U.S. public relations firm that helped Edward Seaga's Jamaica Labour Party win elections in 1980 (MacDonald 1986: 204). The ONR exhorted the others to "clear the coast and let there be a straight fight between the enemy and the ONR" (quoted in Ryan 1989b, 257). The PNM seemed particularly threatened by the ONR, with Chambers declaring some weeks before the elections, "Not a damn seat for them!" (Ghany 1996, 410)

Meanwhile, the other main opposition groups were building a coalition. In the 28 August 1977 issue of *Tapia*, commenting on the removal of Panday as Leader of Opposition by the Shah faction, Lloyd Best argued that

³ Ryan (1989b, 258-90), Ghany (1996, 408-11) and MacDonald (1986, 201-5) provide details of the campaign and its aftermath.

⁴ See Ghany (1996, 303)

the ULF took short cuts with half-ripe organisation and half-arsed ideology. ... But they could have chosen differently. In 1976 they had the choice to break the PNM monopoly with a UPF [United People's Front] along the lines of India;⁵ but they preferred backdoor negotiation with ANR Robinson, a tactic exposing their basic pessimism and their congenital deviousness. (quoted in Ryan 1978, 473-4)

In the same article, Best made the important observation that "we are dealing essentially with non-competing groups," focused on their own particular spaces. By February-March 1981 he and Tapia colleague Allan Harris had elaborated the theoretical basis of "a viable coalition politics" – a federal "party of parties" – arguing,

As far as we are concerned in Tapia, Tobago constitutes no less than half the country, constitutionally speaking. Within Trinidad, Caroni-Naparima is no less than half the island, socially and culturally speaking.

If these are the constitutional, social and cultural realities then these are the conditions to which the practical politics are forced to relate. These are the only premises from which we can meaningfully bargain about the effective government of a Republic, independent and free.

It is the organised rivalry between Caroni-Naparima, Tobago and the rest of the country which will make it possible to govern wisely. It is the bargaining between them which will allow our Cabinet to order priorities between agriculture and industry, between big business and small business, between country and town, between Central Government and County Council. It is indeed only the rivalry between leaders and constituent parties that will make it possible to root out corruption. If the leaders are not constantly looking over one another's shoulders, we will wait forever for integrity legislation. Who would there be to monitor the Doctor?

The new government in 1981 would be a much better one if it were a coalition party and not simply a coalition *government*.⁶ (Best 1991b, 49-50)

⁵ In 1975 Best had declared an interest in forming a coalition of all the opposition parties along the lines of the Janata Dal party in India (Ryan 1989b, 257). It might be argued, however, that the 1957-60 DLP experience should have provided the model – its life cycle complete and its lessons cautionary – as opposed to the heady formative years of the Janata Dal.

⁶ An earlier version of the theory was presented on 13 January 1980 as a paper for Tapia's 1979-80 General Assembly, identifying four constituent regions: north, central, and south Trinidad, and Tobago (Measures 1991).

On 1 March 1981 at a meeting held in Port of Spain, ANR Robinson, Chairman of the DAC; Lloyd Best, Chairman of Tapia; and Basdeo Panday, Political Leader of the ULF had reached "complete accord" on the principles that the DAC, Tapia, and the ULF would not contest against each other, give maximum support and collaboration to each other in all constituencies, collaborate in a programme of voter registration, and work together more generally in preparation for the elections (Lequay 1991, 48). The coalition initiated its campaign in July 1981 under the name, the National Alliance of Trinidad and Tobago (NATT). As with the ULF in 1976, there had been no agreed leading candidate. In addition, Robinson refused to contest the general elections, preferring instead to hold on to the chairmanship of the THA. This uncertainty raised anxieties about an Indian (Panday) becoming prime minister (MacDonald 1986, 202-3; Ryan 1989b, 265). The absence of a clear leader, in combination with the media savvy of the Port of Spain based ONR (ONR candidate for Tunapuna, Rhona Baptiste, for example, was the wife of Owen Baptiste, editor of the *Trinidad Express* and *People* magazine), probably explains the small amount of press coverage received by the NATT.⁷

In the elections, eleven parties and two independents contested, providing 156 candidates (closer in number to the 154 candidates in 1966 than the 269 contesting in 1976). The parties included NJAC, who decided to contest elections for the first time, and the odd revival of the old TLP with its lone candidate, Ranjit Kumar (who had fought against the TLP during his political career in the 1940s and 1950s) (see Table

⁷ For example, the November 1981 issue of *People* magazine had devoted twenty pages and its cover to features and analyses of the ONR and its challenge to the PNM, compared to little more than one-third of a page of copy to the DAC, ONR, and ULF, and another third to photographs of Best, Panday and Robinson.

5-1). Voter turnout had improved over 1976, with 415,416 or 56.4 percent of the electorate casting their ballots.

Table 5-1. Election Statistics, 1981 General Elections

	Number of candidates	Number of seats won	Total Votes	% of Votes
PNM	36	26	218,557	52.6%
ULF	12	8	62,781	15.1%
DAC	8	2	15,390	3.7%
ONR	34	0	91,704	22.1%
NJAC	34	0	13,710	3.3%
Tapia House	16	0	9,401	2.3%
National Freedom Party	10	0	864	0.2%
Fargo House Movement	1	0	143	0.0%
People's Republican Party	1	0	25	0.0%
Trinidad Labour Party	1	0	34	0.0%
West Indian Political Congress Movement	1	0	130	0.0%
Independents	2	0	39	0.0%
Rejected Ballots			2,638	0.6%
TOTALS	156	36	415,416	100.0%

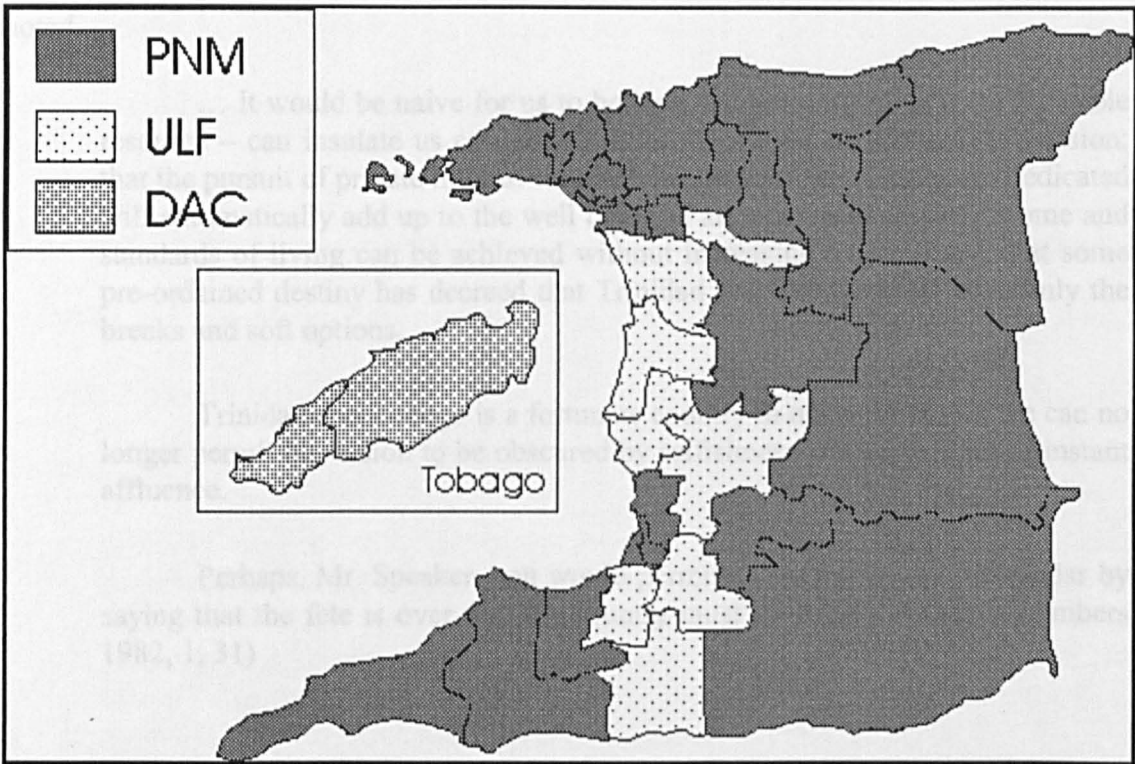
Source: GORTT (1982b, 202-3)

The most surprising result of the elections was the failure to capture any seats by the ONR, although their share of votes cast exceed that of the NATT (who received 87,572 votes, or 21.1 percent). The ONR secured less votes than the PNM in every constituency except one: Oropouche, contested by ONR Deputy Leader Suruj Rambachan (controversial for his outspoken pro-Hindu views), where their votes exceed the PNM's by 4,072 to 3,079. But the party lost to the ULF who secured the constituency with 5,161 votes, giving it a plurality of 40.8 percent (GORTT 1982b, 203, 213). Significantly, ten seats were won by pluralities in 1981 as opposed to six in 1976, when there were 113 more candidates contesting. In 1981 six of the PNM's seats (St. Joseph, Nariva, Caroni East, Pointe-à-Pierre, Naparima, Princes Town) were won with less than 50 percent of the ballots cast, and four of the ULF's (St. Augustine, Chaguanas, Tabaquite, Oropouche) (GORTT 1982b, 208-14). The ONR's defeat had

been a great embarrassment for Hudson-Phillips and he subsequently withdrew from active politics (Ryan 1989a, 42).⁸

The PNM, on the other hand, secured twenty-six seats, its largest majority ever, despite the firm hold of Tobago by the DAC. The PNM extended its hold in Trinidad by winning the sugar belt constituency of Caroni East and the southern Indian-dominated constituency of Princes Town (see Figure 5-1). In fact, three PNM constituencies – San Fernando East, Nariva, and Princes Town – had Indian majorities of 53 percent, 55 percent, and 60 percent, respectively (Ryan 1989b, 279). Notably, Satnarine Maharaj, Secretary General of the Hindu SDMS and son-in-law of the late Bhadase Maraj, supported the PNM on its platforms in six constituencies. Maharaj was unimpressed with the NATT and expressed appreciation for the freedom the SDMS had enjoyed under PNM Governments despite the fact that the SDMS had opposed them openly for twenty-five years. Maharaj, however, was also in a religious rivalry with the ONR's Suruj Rambachan (*TG* 23 November 1981, 1; Maharaj 1999).

⁸ LaGuerre (1983, 133) provides a gloomy reading of the 1981 elections arguing that "owing to the diminishing influence of the race factor, Trinidad is moving inexorably towards one-party rule. ... The future shape of the party system in Trinidad and Tobago ... depends on the electoral future of the ONR."

Figure 5-1. Distribution of Constituencies by Party, 1981 General Elections

Created by author from GORTT (1982b)

"The Fête Is Over": Facing the Economic Downturn, 1982-3

With his mandate from the electorate, Prime Minister Chambers, assuming the new Ministry of Finance and Planning, continued his reformist rhetoric in his Budget Speech of 18 January 1982. Warning of a global recession, inflation, monetary instability, high interest rates, growing unemployment, and "a wholly unprecedented level of indebtedness," he highlighted the weaknesses of the Trinidad and Tobago economy which the country had to confront – such as inflation rates between 10 and 22 percent per year, a domestic budget deficit reaching TT\$2,227 million in 1980 (hidden by oil revenues), significant increases in wage rates at the same time as productivity had been declining, and the inefficiency of producers in the protected domestic market

(Chambers 1982, 1, 5). Outlining the challenges facing the country in the 1980s, he noted,

... It would be naive for us to believe that petroleum – a non-renewable resource – can insulate us completely from the effects of economic recession; that the pursuit of private interest to which so many of our citizens are dedicated will automatically add up to the well being of all; that gains in real income and standards of living can be achieved without increasing productivity; that some pre-ordained destiny has decreed that Trinidad and Tobago shall have only the breaks and soft options. ...

Trinidad and Tobago is a fortunate country in many ways, but we can no longer permit our vision to be obscured by selfishness and the pursuit of instant affluence.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, you would permit to me end in the vernacular by saying that the fete is over and the country must go back to work. (Chambers 1982, 1, 31)

An important announcement of the Budget had been the return to planning (the revised *Third Five-Year Plan, 1968-73* [GORTT 1970] had been the last of its kind) through the establishment of a broad-based National Economic Planning Commission (NEPC) headed by Governor of the Central Bank, William Demas. The government also had invited a joint economic mission from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for consultations in the middle of the year (Chambers 1982, 20-2).

In June 1983 the World Bank published its report, suggesting strategies for Trinidad and Tobago to successfully manage an "extended period of readjustment" to a context of softened international oil prices and dwindling national oil reserves, while maintaining "the progress of the 1970s," which had seen "rapid increases in real income as well as impressive gains in the provision of basic needs to the poorest" (World Bank 1983, i). Soon after, in 1983-4, the NEPC had released its two-volume report, *The Imperatives of Adjustment: Draft Development Plan, 1983-86* (sometimes cited as Report of the Demas Task Force, or the Demas Report), with its recommendations for

adaptation to "a new long-term structural situation which requires profound adjustments by everybody in the country – the public sector, workers at all levels, private sector employers, housewives, farmers and indeed consumers in general" (GORTT 1984b, 3).⁹

The 1984 Budget Speech continued Chambers's pleas for restrained consumer spending, as he noted that Trinidad and Tobago had been graduated by the World Bank, without a phase-out lending period, because of (in the Bank's words) Trinidad and Tobago's

relatively easy access to international capital markets, ... [the] country's social development [being] ... well above the level of most bank borrowers and above, also, the level of some countries already graduated by the Bank, and ... [Trinidad and Tobago's] net foreign reserves, measured as a proportion of the country's annual imports, [being] ... also larger than in most other countries, including the developed ones. (quoted in Chambers 1984, 4)

Despite the government's rhetoric of prudence, the TT\$4,401 million available in 1980 in its special long-term development funds, foreign reserves amounting to 19.5 months of imports in 1981, and the peaking of average annual oil prices in 1982 at US\$33.50 per barrel,¹⁰ the Chambers administration found itself in economic difficulties as early as 1983. Evidence of imprudence could be seen in the fact that between 1974 and 1979, TT\$3,482.4 million had been withdrawn from the special funds, while between 1980 and 1983 total withdrawals amounted to TT\$11,586.1 (see Table 5-2 and Table 5-3).

⁹ As a proportion of real GDP, consumption had risen from 60 percent in 1970 to 73.4 percent in 1981 (CBTT 1993).

¹⁰ The average annual prices, it should be noted, may not represent the actual selling price of Trinidad and Tobago's oil on the international market.

Table 5-2. Special Funds for Long-Term Development, 1979-83 (TT\$ Million)

	Withdrawals to 31 December	Balance as at 31 December	Estimated Income for following year	Amount Available for following year	Estimated Expenditure for following year
1979	\$3,482.4	\$2,391.3	\$2,010.5	\$4,401.8	\$2,737.0
1983	\$15,068.5	\$169.3	\$2,340.6	\$2,340.6	\$2,340.6

Sources: GORTT 1980, 1983

Table 5-3. Selected Economic Indicators, 1981-3

	1981	1982	1983
Crude Oil Prices (US\$/barrel)	\$32.50	\$33.50	\$29.30
Crude Oil Production (millions of barrels per day)	189.3	177.0	159.8
Current Oil Revenue (TT\$ million)	\$4,253.0	\$3,274.2	\$2,461.4
Total Revenue (TT\$ million)	\$6,850.7	\$6,824.7	\$6,438.8
Current Oil Revenue (% of Total Revenue)	62.1%	48.0%	38.2%
Direct Taxes on Individuals (as % of Total Direct Taxes)	16.9%	30.5%	36.7%
Indirect Taxes (as % of Current Revenue)	11.9%	13.9%	17.3%
Total Expenditure (TT\$ million)	\$6,674.9	\$9,477.1	\$8,782.9
Total Expenditure (as % of GDP at market prices)	38.9%	47.4%	45.8%
Current Expenditure (as % of Total Expenditure)	52.3%	62.2%	71.1%
Overall Surplus/Deficit (TT\$ million)	\$175.8	-\$2,652.4	-\$2,344.1
Overall Surplus/Deficit (as % of GDP at market prices)	1%	-13.8%	-12.2%
Net Official Foreign Reserves (TT\$ million)	\$7,686.2	\$7,160.1	\$4,998.4
Import Cover Ratio (months)	19.5	12.9	9.9
Total Debt to GDP Ratio	10.2%	10.7%	13.9%
GDP growth at constant 1970 prices	4.0%	3.8%	-10.3%
Unemployment Rate	10.5%	9.9%	11.1%

Source: CBTT (1993)

Trinidad's 125-year-old petroleum industry¹¹ had not been able to take full advantage of the price rise in 1982 due to the decline in crude production from its peak of 229.6 million barrels per day in 1978. Government revenues from oil reached its height in 1981 and thereafter dropped precipitously, 42 percent from 1981 to 1983 alone (CBTT 1993).

¹¹ In 1595 Sir Walter Raleigh discovered the Pitch Lake in La Brea, and Trinidad's first oil well was drilled in 1857, also at La Brea, by the Merrimac Oil Company of the USA (Brereton 1981, 199).

The government had been able to maintain its level of total revenue in these years by increasing the direct taxation of individuals, which had risen from 16.9 percent to 36.7 percent of total direct taxes. The government had also increased indirect taxes, which moved from providing 11.9 percent to 17.3 percent of current government revenue between 1981 and 1983. Despite the maintenance of revenue levels with a heavier burden of individual taxation, the government in 1982 had incurred a deficit of TT\$2,652.4 million, by far the largest on record (the next largest was TT\$135.3 million in 1972). Current expenditure accounted for 86 percent of the increase, and 68 percent of the current expenditure increase went to wages and salaries (CBTT 1993). That year the government conceded to several demands for close to fifty-two thousand public employees, allowing a public sector pay award that helped to more than double its wages and salaries bill from TT\$1,342.60 million in 1981 to TT\$2,970.6 million in 1982. This action had been interpreted by observers to be political, as the PNM was looking ahead to the local government elections due the following year (CBTT 1993; MacDonald 1986, 206).

"The Party Of Parties": The Rise of the National Alliance for Reconstruction

On 14 November 1982 the Alliance Inaugural Conference was held at the Chaguaramas Convention Centre. Lloyd Best (1991a, 58-60), the most articulate theoretician of the process of coalition, presented the complete version of his "party of parties" idea, based on an extremely perceptive model which saw nine ethnic groups at the base of the political system:

1. The Afro-Saxon Community of the East-West Corridor founded on the College Exhibition and Christian churching

2. The Garveyite Black Power Community, occupying the fringes of Afro-Saxon society in Port of Spain, drawn to Low church-cum-Shango religion
3. The "Grenadian" working class in the oilfields, a classic European Marxist proletariat with nothing to sell but their labour to the multinational oil companies of Shell, Texaco, and BP
4. The Tobagonians, with the militancy of the Grenadian, the African metaphysic of the Garveyite, and the rural sensibilities of the Hindu
5. The Hindu in Caroni, involved in both small-scale and plantation agriculture, outside of the Middle Eastern, Christian-Judaic framework, less inclined than the Muslims and the Presbyterians to become involved in the urban world of San Fernando and the East-West Corridor
6. The Muslims who, though Indian by race and Oriental by origin, moved comparatively easily in the urban environments
7. The Presbyterian Indians who had made the deliberate decision to join the mainstream of College Exhibition education and Christian churching, functioning as part of the Afro-Saxon community and acquiring, under colonial conditions, "fitness to rule"
8. The French Creoles, who give their name collectively to the small white and off-white minorities, driven together by mainstream perceptions, economic interest, their "high" colour and their "prestigious" origins outside of the subservient slave and indenture areas of Africa and India; yet they neither acquired "the habits of a class with power as distinct from a class with only influence," nor, because of its easy and ready influence on the British coloniser, the drive to education and competence so central to the Presbyterian and Afro-Saxon
9. The group which does not easily fit into any of the above interests, (post-war) nationalists or (pre-war) internationalist intellectuals, with mixed cultural exposure abroad, mixed race, mixed ethnic origin, or mixed marriages that make easy association with other groups problematic

Best continued,

The Afro-Saxons of the East-West Corridor and the Hindus of Caroni, as the two big voting blocs, by virtue of their numbers (about 35% each) are the natural centres of gravity. The Tobagonians by virtue of their insular condition and their physical separation, have formed another centre of gravity – as have the French Creoles, by virtue of their prized class and colour status, in a colonial and continuing colonial situation. (Best 1991a, 60)

It was his idea that the PNM was the natural party of the Afro-Saxons, building in 1961 an alliance of Tobagonians, Garveyites, Muslims, Presbyterians, "Grenadians", and the intellectuals. Since then, he argued, that association had gradually separated, while in 1982 the Alliance Party of parties had "almost all the trumps in the present game of power and politics in Trinidad and Tobago" (Best 1991a, 62).

In February 1983, the Alliance had strengthened its hand by entering into a "non-aggression pact" with the ONR in order to form an "Accommodation," each group agreeing not to contest seats in which the other was contesting. In May 1983 Leader of the Opposition Basdeo Panday had appointed as an Opposition Senator ONR leader Karl Hudson-Phillips, after an eight year absence from Parliament¹² (Ryan 1989a, 4, 45; Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 404). After contentious negotiation the parties agreed that in the coming local elections the ONR would contest sixty-five seats and the NATT forty-seven (Ryan 1989a, 42-3; GORTT [1984a], 284-91; Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 404; MacDonald 1986, 208).¹³

The elections were held on 8 August 1983 with a voter turnout of 32.9 percent, significantly higher than the 19.7 percent turnout in 1980. The Accommodation won sixty-six seats to the PNM's fifty-four (see Table 5-4).

¹² Although only the ULF and DAC had won seats for the Alliance in 1981, Senators had been appointed by Leader of the Opposition Basdeo Panday from the three Alliance parties. This included Lloyd Best (as Leader of the Opposition in the Senate), Nuevo Diaz, Lincoln Myers, Dr. Sahadeo Basdeo, Neville A. Clarke, Alloy Lequay, and Dr. Brinsley Samaroo (who became Senate Opposition Leader after Best had left in 1983 on a three-year Evaluation Mission in Central Africa for UNCTAD) (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 404; *TTR* 19 June 1987, 9; Ryan 1989a, 73).

¹³ It is notable that even with this arrangement of four parties, candidates were not put up for eight seats – two in Port of Spain, one in San Fernando, one in Point Fortin, three in St. George West, and one in Victoria (GORTT [1984a], 284-91).

Table 5-4. Election Statistics, 1983 Local Government Elections

	Number of candidates	Number of seats won	Total Votes	% of Votes
PNM	120	54	95,426	39.1%
Alliance	47	40	82,904	34.0%
ONR	65	26	49,058	20.1%
NJAC	103	0	13,013	5.3%
CUPC¹⁴	1	0	187	0.1%
Independent	5	0	1,280	0.5%
Rejected Ballots			2,157	0.9%
TOTALS	341	120	244,025	100.0%

Source: GORTT ([1984a], 284-91)

It was the first defeat of the PNM since the county council elections of 1959. ULF candidates secured thirty-eight seats and Tapia candidates won two seats for the first time. Significantly, the ONR won ten of its twenty six seats in the PNM's urban strongholds: four to the PNM's eight in Port of Spain, three to the PNM's four in Arima, and three to the PNM's six in San Fernando (GORTT [1984a], 84; MacDonald 1986, 209). Robinson remarked that the PNM had come now to "occupy small pockets and unproductive areas in towns" (*Trinidad and Tobago Review* 18/23 December 1986, 16; Ghany 1996, 70).

The momentum to definitively cement the alliance had been slowed by the many rivalries – personal, ethnic, regional, ideological – between the groups.¹⁵ From 13-5 April 1984, the Alliance and the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of the West Indies (an

¹⁴ The source (GORTT [1984a]) does not list the full name of this party, which fielded its sole candidate in Curepe.

¹⁵ Ryan (1989a, 40-65) provides an extended account of the debates and arguments, which included rivalries between ONR Deputy Leader Suruj Rambachan and ULF members Basdeo Panday and Trevor Sudama over leadership of Indians, Hindus, and the Oropouche constituency; between Panday and Hudson-Phillips over "class ideology," and personal enmity during the Black Power marches; between ex-PNM members Hudson-Phillips and Robinson, who were bitter enemies in the debates over the Public Order Bill of 1970. Other issues included Creole apprehension of those who advocated Indian "cultural autonomy" (meaning, quite tamely, little more than an enhanced media presence); Tobagonian

institution founded by Tapia) organised at the Valsayn Teachers' College a conference titled "Forging a New Democracy," whose proceedings were published in March 1985 (Sebastien 1985).¹⁶ A major victory had been procured by the Alliance-Accommodation in the November 1984 THA elections when the DAC secured eleven seats and 11,189 votes, as opposed to the PNM's one seat and 8,200 votes. The election heightened the interest of voters, whose numbers increased to 19,786 in 1984 from 15,990 in 1980 (GORTT [1985]; MacDonald 1986, 215).¹⁷

In October 1983 and April 1985 influential SARA polls had been conducted, with the latter poll showing 70 percent of the sample dissatisfied with Chambers's performance as prime minister, 54 percent of the sample agreeing that the ONR-NATT coalition was "a good thing," and that ANR Robinson would receive by far the greatest amount of votes from the African, Indian and Mixed/Other supporters of the coalition (Ryan 1989a, 44-51; *TTR* 18/23 December 1986, 5).

On 30 August 1985, the Alliance-Accommodation leaders (except Best who was in Central Africa) flew to Grenada on a private jet owned by the powerful local conglomerate, Neal and Massey (whose CEO Sydney Knox had been closely involved in the mediation), to meet Hudson-Phillips, who had been state prosecutor for the Grenadian Government in the trial for the murder of Maurice Bishop and other members of the People's Revolutionary Government. The "Grenada Accord" was agreed upon, which stipulated that the allocation of seats in 1986 would follow a

"nationhood" (meaning internal self-government and recognition of distinct status, but not independence); and recurring disputes over the allocation of constituencies to parties.

¹⁶ From the ONR, only Mervyn Assam was listed as a participant..

¹⁷ NJAC contested all twelve THA seats but only secured 274 votes, or 1.4 percent of the ballots cast. No other parties or independents ran (GORTT [1985], 18).

formula based on the results of the 1981 general elections. This meeting resolved the leadership question as Hudson-Phillips and Panday subsequently accepted Deputy Leaderships so that ANR Robinson could become Political Leader.¹⁸ On 8 September 1985 the inaugural convention of the newly formed federal political party, the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR),¹⁹ was held. The following day the federal party was publicly launched at the Queen's Park Savannah. Four months later, on 14 February 1986, the Friday after Carnival, the individual parties of the NAR were dissolved, with the intention to form a unitary party.²⁰ As yet without a constitution for the unitary formation, the party executive had been nominated, avoiding potentially embarrassing fights during the election season. Two documents – *Platform for Democracy*, and in July 1986 the ninety-eight page *Platform for Change: An Agenda for the Future* – attempted to mediate and resolve the various positions within the party. However, these documents and, later, the party's manifesto – written by a team led by ULF MP for Chaguanas and former lecturer in economics at UWI, Winston Dookeran – were apparently never formally ratified by the party (Ryan 1989a, 40-63; *TE* 2 August 1987, 1; *TTR* 18/23 December 1986, 2).

On 7 August 1986, Lloyd Best returned from a three-year UNCTAD Evaluation Mission in Central Africa and Haiti and almost immediately expressed dissatisfaction

¹⁸ Robinson, however, displayed an apparent reluctance to re-enter the politics of Trinidad, which he had once described as a "perishing society" with "calaloo politics" (*TTR* 18/23 December 1986, 2; Ryan 1989a, 58). ("Calaloo" is an Afro-Creole Trinidadian dish made by thoroughly blending dasheen bush, hot peppers, crab meat, ochro, and coconut milk in one pot.) Problems with the coalition were seen in the August 1985 elections for county council chairmen, when National Alliance councillors had flouted party directives by attempting to block their Accommodation (ONR) colleagues (*TE* 12 April 1987, 9).

¹⁹ ANR Robinson (1999), in an interview with the author, had claimed that some wanted to name the party the Alliance for National Reconstruction (ANR), but he rejected such encouragement of a "cult of personality," which he claimed to have fought strongly against in the PNM while he had been a member.

that the Tapia constituency had become marginal to the NAR enterprise – not “merely” in leadership positions, but more fundamentally in terms of vision and direction.²¹ Essentially, Best and his colleagues argued that the NAR had concentrated too much on the winning of office and personal advancement, while systematically avoiding the tough issues of economic reconstruction during a time of recession and, most importantly, governing a fragmented society through the interplay of constituencies that the NAR represented (Four Letters 1991). On 15 August, the former Tapia “Group of Party Members” had submitted comments on the *Platform for Change*, describing it as “an amorphous mass of proposals, many of them little more than half-baked.” It continued, “Between good intentions and effective implementation there has been, and continues to be, a void. ... The centrepiece for a manifesto of national reconstruction must ... be a policy and programme for political reconstruction” (Four Letters 1991, 71).

On 11 September Best had called a meeting of former Tapia members to further articulate his dissent, publishing his report and feature address in the press, assuring the population and the NAR that his dissent was not meant to be disruptive but constructive (*TG* 21 Sep 86, 5-7; *TTR* 31 October 1986, 7-17). He disdained the view that he was “rocking the boat.” On 25 September 1986, Lincoln Myers had resigned from the deputy directorship of the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of the West Indies, and along with former Tapia members Beau Tewarie (General Secretary of the NAR), Gloria Henry, Shirley Ann Hussein, and Cecil Rampersad, they offered themselves to be

²⁰ Ryan (1989a, 51) claims that the ONR leadership had been alone in seeking the views of its members regarding the formation of unitary party. However, it seems that Tapia regularly discussed the issue, and were sceptical (Best and Harris 1991; *TTR* 31 October 1986).

considered as prospective NAR candidates²² (*TTR* 31 October 1986, 15). Best gave his colleagues his blessing, but did not himself become an executive member of the NAR or a contestant in the elections.²³

Not dissimilarly, the ONR's representation in the NAR had been less than expected. Karl Hudson-Phillips spent much of his time in Grenada after he withdrew, with some resentment, from the leadership contest, and the ONR as a party had its representation cut from the twenty-one it should have received under the "Grenada Accord", to thirteen²⁴ (Ryan 1989a, 57-8, 62).

Whatever problems were occurring during the NAR's construction, however, seemed to be hidden by the Chambers Administration's steady loss of the confidence of the population. Perhaps to rejuvenate the government's image, on 28 February 1985 Prime Minister Chambers announced a major Cabinet re-shuffle, affecting ten of the government's nineteen Ministers and four Parliamentary Secretaries (Ghany 1996, 437-8; *NTT* 27 March 1985, 1-2). The change was essentially minor, however.

Perhaps at the base of the government's unpopularity at the time was its inability to cope in 1986 with the acute drop in oil prices (46 percent below the 1985 average),

²¹ Two weeks after the NAR had been launched as a unitary party, Best had written in the *Trinidad Express* (9 March 1986, 15) his disagreement with the movement away from coalition towards a unitary party that might effectively submerge the differing constituency interests.

²² Hussein and Rampersad were unsuccessful in their bids to be NAR candidates

²³ Robinson had publicly argued against Best's claims, arguing in September that the NAR had given members of the party and the general public formal opportunities to comment on its draft *Platform for Change* (quoted in Ryan 1989a, 83). In October, Robinson pointed out that Best sought equal status with other party leaders, but that the NAR Deputy Leaders already represented the two parties dissolved to form the NAR: the NATT and the ONR (*TG* 26 October 86, 1). If one were cynical, one could argue that Best's "nine ethnic groups" theory was an elaborate attempt to justify for Tapia a role greater than its electoral performance would have warranted.

having locked itself into deficit spending, increasingly using its dwindling savings on current expenditure, and borrowing at unprecedented levels (see Table 5-5). The government's fiscal burdens were made heavier in 1984-5 with the acquisition of the local assets of Texaco (including the Pointe-à-Pierre refinery), who had decided to pull out of Trinidad and Tobago as part of its global restructuring (*NTT* 26 June 1985, 10; Maingot 1998, 22; Kambon 1988, 325-6).²⁵

Table 5-5. Selected Economic Indicators, 1984-6

	1984	1985	1986
Crude Oil Prices (US\$/barrel)	\$28.50	\$28.00	\$15.00
Crude Oil Production (millions of barrels per day)	169.5	176.1	168.9
Current Oil Revenue (TT\$ million)	\$2,759.7	\$2,457.1	\$1,690.6
Total Revenue (TT\$ million)	\$6,551.7	\$6,361.2	\$5,234.9
Current Oil Revenue (% of Total Revenue)	42.1%	38.6%	32.3%
Direct Taxes on Individuals (as % of Total Direct Taxes)	33.6%	34.8%	39.1%
Indirect Taxes (as % of Current Revenue)	17.6%	21.2%	23.1%
Total Expenditure (TT\$ million)	\$8,307.9	\$7,723.0	\$6,614.6
Total Expenditure (as % of GDP at market prices)	43.6%	43.4%	38.1%
Current Expenditure (as % of Total Expenditure)	75.7%	78.7%	85.2%
Overall Surplus/Deficit (TT\$ million)	-\$1,756.2	-\$1,361.8	-\$1,379.7
Overall Surplus/Deficit (as % of GDP at market prices)	-9.2%	-7.6%	-7.9%
Net Official Foreign Reserves (TT\$ million)	\$2,850.0	\$3,579.9	\$1,184.5
Import Cover Ratio (months)	7.4	11.5	2.9
Total Debt to GDP Ratio	16.7%	27.8%	37.0%
GDP growth at constant 1970 prices	-5.8%	-4.1%	-3.3%
Unemployment Rate	13.3%	15.7%	17.2%

Source: CBTT (1993)

By 1986, revenue continued to fall, capital expenditure was progressively cut to 14.8 percent of total expenditure, foreign exchange had dropped to only 2.9 months' worth of imports (from 19.5 months five years earlier), real GDP continued in its fourth year of successive decline, unemployment rose from an all-time low of 9.9 percent in 1982

²⁴ The NAR apparently had brought in new party members and candidates, affiliated to none of the former parties, in order to "balance" its slate (Ryan 1989a, 62).

²⁵ Texaco had operated in Trinidad and Tobago since 1913 (GORTT 1998, 19).

to 17.2 percent (the highest rate then recorded), and the total debt to GDP ratio had also risen to its hitherto highest levels. In August 1986 Kirpilani's, one of the country's four leading conglomerates, had become one of the 170 companies that officially entered into receivership between 1984 and 1988 (Ryan 1989a, 257; Kiely 1996, 158).

That same month Robinson had charged, "For the purposes of winning election the Government has used up Treasury's balances. ... To put it simply: The whole country is still paying for the PNM election campaign in 1981" (quoted in Ryan 1989a, 81). Robinson claimed that this had been common PNM practice since 1961 and that as PNM Minister of Finance in 1966 he was able to oppose it successfully, until his removal in 1967 (Ryan 1989a, 81).

Added to the failing economy was the string of PNM scandals in 1985-6. The first, and one of the most embarrassing, occurred on 19 November 1985 when Millette Engineering Company – headed by PNM Senator, Dr. Emrin Millette, and represented by prominent PNM member Robin Montano – seized two floors of furniture and twenty vehicles from the PNM-controlled Port of Spain City Council over an unsettled TT\$5.9 million debt (Ghany 1996, 443-9).

More seriously, in December 1985 Opposition Senator Lincoln Myers had conducted a highly publicised forty-day dawn-till-dusk fast on the steps of the Hall of Justice to call attention to the government's "lack of accountability." The fast was immediately motivated by the refusal of a state enterprise to hand over to the parliamentary Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee (of which he was chairman) papers deemed necessary to conduct an inquiry into alleged corruption in the allocation of contracts to build houses for the Corporation. The fast highlighted other issues as well, notably the

government's refusal to publish the findings of the Garvin Scott Commission's Drug Report,²⁶ and the secrecy surrounding the losses of the state-owned Iron and Steel Company of Trinidad and Tobago (ISCOTT) which had been rumoured to be between TT\$179 million to TT\$365 million per year. To demonstrate its own commitment to public morality, the NAR had promised to publish the Scott Report within its first ninety days if it won elections (Yelvington 1987, 29; *TTR* 31 October 1986, 15; Ryan 1989a, 71, 82).

On 6 October 1986, Chairman of the Airports Authority, Selwyn Richardson (PNM Attorney General from 1976-81) resigned over a dispute with the Ministry of Agriculture concerning farming near Piarco airport. Richardson's resignation was given front page coverage in the daily press, where he recounted in detail his efforts to root out corruption from the 1976-81 PNM Administration (particularly with former Minister John O'Halloran) and the government's attempts to silence him. On 16 November, Richardson was presented as a NAR candidate for Ortoire/Mayaro (where he successfully ran against the PNM candidate, his cousin, Leon Prevatt) and was nicknamed "Mr. Clean" during the NAR campaign (*NTT* 29 October 1986, 13; Ghany 1996, 457; Yelvington 1987, 29; Ryan 1989a, 11).

Finally, on 11 November 1986 businessman Dennis Davidson, who had been known to keep company with many PNM ministers, fled the country to escape arrest by the

²⁶ The Drug Report apparently was linked in the public mind to the escalating crime rate in the country. Between 1980 and 1985, the total number of crimes reported annually had risen from 35,036 to 53,998 (GORTT 1991). The government based its decision not to publish the report on the grounds that the commission had named magistrates and police officers based on testimony given by persons involved in the drug underworld, without allowing opportunities for the accused to respond to the charges (Ryan 1989a, 82).

police, who had wanted him in connection with a US\$100 million "EC-0"²⁷ foreign currency racket. The incident reminded the country of John O'Halloran – allegedly a major figure in the "DC-9 Scandal" involving corruption in the sale of airplanes to the state-owned British West Indian Airways, and in scandals surrounding the construction of the Caroni Racing Complex – who was also "allowed" to leave the country for Canada in 1983 after resigning under contentious circumstances from the chairmanship of the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority in 1981 (*TG* 4 August 1987, 1; *Yelvington* 1987, 29; Ghany 1996, 407-8; MacDonald 1986, 197; Ryan 1989a, 70, 81-2; *CI* July 1995, 2).

PNM ministers, past and present, such as John Eckstein, Kamaluddin Mohammed, Dr. Cuthbert Joseph, and George Chambers himself, defended the government against these allegations, pointing out rightly – even if only weakly at times – that no PNM minister had ever been found guilty of corruption. In August 1986, surprisingly, Lloyd Best criticised the NAR for blaming the country's economic ills on the PNM, arguing that it was yet another way of avoiding the responsibility for both the cause and cure of the country's economic crisis:

People have the impertinence to say the PNM wasted the money. The country wanted the PNM to waste the money. The country insisted on it. ... Governments ... can't waste money unless the populations wish them so to do ... and the problem in the country is that everybody thinks that everybody else is responsible except them. (quoted in Ryan 1989a, 76)

The most infamous statement during the campaign, however, had been made by Desmond Cartey, MP for Laventille and Minister of Housing and Resettlement. Cartey

²⁷ "EC-0" had been the name of the Central Bank form used to apply for foreign exchange in a system introduced by the Chambers administration in 1982 (Hilaire 1992, 29; Forde et al. 1997, 433).

responded to a heckler at a public meeting in his constituency, "Who ent tief in Trinidad? All ah we tief" (Yelvington 1987, 30; Ryan 1989a, 71). In an observant article titled, "The PNM Could Use a Dose of Dignity," *Trinidad Express* columnist David Renwick wrote, "I cannot help wondering whether Mr. Cartey would dared have said what he did the other night had Dr. Williams been alive" (*TE* 7 December 1986, 8).

Certainly, the PNM had lost much of its intellectual, progressive, and resolute character after the death of Williams. Prime Minister Chambers seemed to be considered an embarrassment by many Trinidadians, who derisively referred to him as "dummy" or "duncey" in an inordinate number of jokes about his witlessness (Yelvington 1987, 12; *TTR* 18/23 December 1986, 13; Ryan 1989a, 70).²⁸ The personal disrespect reached a low in August 1986 when, at a televised football match, the audience "roundly booed" Chambers as he was called upon to present the trophy to the winning Canadian team (Yelvington 1987, 12).

Also in that month, Minister of Works Hugh Francis had re-paved the heavily-used Wrightson Road in Port of Spain. To commemorate its completion, the Minister held a press conference at which he unveiled a monument with a marble plaque imprinted with "The Hon. Hugh Francis." The population reacted with disgust at the entire undertaking, with letters to the editors complaining about the incident for the next two months (Yelvington 1987, 29). Contradicting Dr. Williams's publicly and widely acknowledged wish that nothing ever be named after him, the Chambers government had named the new twin towers financial complex after Williams and re-named the

²⁸ Best argues that the cruel jokes had circulated before the November 1981 elections, while Ryan claims that they were heightened after the Chambers administration refused to support the 1983 U.S. intervention in Grenada.

"Mount Hope Medical Complex," the "Eric Williams Medical Complex." The *Trinidad Guardian* commented on the issue in "The Pappyshowing²⁹ of Eric Williams," criticising the use of Williams as "a prop for people who are still unable to stand on their own. ... One can just imagine how Dr. Williams, noted for blunt, incisive comments, would have reacted" (*TG* 28 September 1986, 3; Yelvington 1987, 30).

The available accounts seem to show that the PNM campaign was disproportionately marked by fear and nervous outburst. At a speech to the PNM Youth League in July 1986, Chambers indicated that rather than follow Williams's advice to "wait for the white of their eyes," he would "shoot you from behind"; that the NAR "was all part of a grand design to wrest political power from a certain section of the community"; and that a "political calamity" would follow if a coalition government were elected since "electoral victory precipitated conflict or 'war' in coalitions" (quoted in Ryan 1989a, 69, 72). Hugh Francis asked why people in the urban areas of Port of Spain were being asked to change their voting behaviour while people in Caroni were not. Senator Muriel Donawa-McDavidson, Minister in the Ministry of Community Development and Local Government was alleged to have exclaimed to Indian protesters outside of Parliament that "all yuh have the money, all yuh have the land, all yuh want the government too" (*TE* 30 August 1987, *Independence* magazine, 7; Ryan 1989a, 72). Perhaps as a reaction, in August PNM back-bench MP for Nariva, Hardeo Hardath complained, "I do get the feeling of 'discrimination' – as if my leaders care not for me, my religion, my race and indeed my constituency. Does Mr. Chambers really want or care for Indians in the party, Parliament and Cabinet?" (quoted in Ryan 1989a, 69; Ghany 1996, 464).

²⁹ "To pappyshow" means "to make a mockery of"

"Vote Them Out, Please": The General Elections of 1986

On 8 November 1986, the PNM held an elections conference at the Chaguaramas Convention Centre at which it presented its manifesto, its thirty-six electoral candidates, and announced the date of elections as 15 December 1986. Crew from the state-owned Trinidad and Tobago Television (TTT) had arrived late for the event, and "as a mark of protest" Chambers had refused to speak until TTT removed all its lights and microphones. The PNM had been complaining that they had been treated unfairly by the media, including the state-owned radio and television stations, and the crowd that night booed and pelted the media.³⁰ With good reason, Lloyd Best agreed that the newspapers in particular were "scandalously biased," writing "as if they have been commissioned to campaign against the ruling party" (Ryan 1989a, 70, 81; Yelvington 1987, 29-30; *TTR* 1 December 1986, 2; *TE* 7 December 1986, 19).

Despite Chambers's claim in his July speech to the Youth League that he was "going to become the most unpopular man in the PNM" when the party's election slate was announced, twenty-eight of the thirty-six candidates were incumbents. Only eight did not contest in 1986, and they withdrew voluntarily.³¹ Indeed, Ministers Hugh Francis and Errol Mahabir (each having strained relations with Chambers) had also planned to retire, but were persuaded to contest one more time (Ghany 1996, 463; Ryan 1989a, 68).

³⁰ A study by WC Clarke noted that 13.5 percent of newspaper articles devoted to the PNM were favourable compared to 80.8 percent which were favourable to the NAR (Ryan 1989a, 81).

³¹ The eight were Desmond Cartey, Ronald Williams (whose brother Michael, a NAR activist, would become President of the Senate in the next parliament), Cuthbert Joseph, Ian Anthony, Winston Williams, Winston Hinds, and Hardeo Hardath. The first three were ministers, and Anthony was a Permanent Secretary. All were generally low-key, however.

The following week, on 16 November, the NAR launched its candidates in Woodford Square to an audience estimated at fifteen thousand (Yelvington 1987, 29; Ryan 1989a, 62-3). The group of mostly well-known, well-qualified, well respected candidates from an impressive diversity of party, class, racial, religious, ideological backgrounds came together under the themes of "one party," "one leader," "one nation," and "one love." The NAR public relations officer had described the party's campaign as "theatre politics," creatively employing calypsos (Gypsy's "Sinking Ship" and Deple's "Vote Dem Out," were both very effective), stylish platform presentation, and much talked about media advertisements (most famously the "baby ad" featuring a baby of unclassifiable mixed race with big innocent eyes, over the caption: "VOTE THEM OUT. Please."). On the other end had been the ONR's "A-Team," a group of thirty activists devoted since 1983 to community work in the poorer areas of PNM urban strongholds of north Trinidad, countering the ONR's image as a "big shot party" (Ryan 1989a, 66-77; Yelvington 1987, 29-31).

That night the twenty-eight page NAR Manifesto, described by Ryan (1989a, 77) as a "best-seller," was released. The sixteen-part manifesto began by acknowledging the importance of the PNM in the 1950s, but it criticised the PNM's failure "to develop a new sense of purpose, ... the political will to achieve the genuine liberation of our people," and the concomitant development of a "clique of individuals, committed to the politics of manipulation and control, determined to cling to office and to power, at whatever cost to the national community." It outlined thirteen critical issues – including jobs, corruption, a bankrupt state, social decay, a lack of accountability, and a lack of patriotism – and offered as evidence of mismanagement details of the government's major cost overruns (spending a combined TT\$1,449 million on the Mount Hope Medical Complex, the Hall of Justice, and the Financial Complex, when TT\$692

million was total of the original contract prices). They chided the government for not allowing the population to "participate, really participate, in the decisions that affect their lives," producing a "moral and spiritual crisis," and being unable to transcend the fragments of "race, class, nation, and party." They pledged to institute an expansionist economic programme of recovery, increase national demand, make the state sector efficient, and acknowledge a "valuable role for private foreign capital within national development objectives." The party called for the population to "put our country together again" by acknowledging the regional and cultural diversity in a "new nationalism." They exhorted voters to remove the PNM and help to "build a new society founded on the ideals of a civilised democracy in which every individual will be free and equal notwithstanding his social standing, his beliefs nor [*sic*] his political affiliation." The party promised that "not demagogy and arrogance but sober statesmanship and reason ... will determine our style of leadership, not arbitrary pig-headedness but consultation and dialogue ... will infuse the process of government" (*TG* 30 November 1986, suppl., 3-27). Speaking of the audience at the party's launch of candidates, the NAR's *Trinidad Guardian* supplement claimed,

people of every creed and race; from every walk of life, and from every place; man and woman, young and old; all proclaimed their belief in, and commitment to a new Trinidad and Tobago. There was no anger in that crowd; no violence. The dominant theme was hope optimism and patriotism; still present in a people so badly abused and battered by the leadership of the party in power.

Their presence and their responses made it overwhelmingly clear that they hold in deep respect, morality, ideals and vision, long discarded by those who have ruled us for the last 3 decades. (*TG* 30 November 1986, suppl., 28)

One week before the elections, David Renwick had argued,

The NAR, for its part, exudes the image and the promise of the PNM in 1956 – self-confidence, appealing to the educated middle class and stirring the interest and the loyalty of the youth, including the female youth, who are today far better education than their counterparts in the mid-fifties. If the PNM has indeed lost the support of the middle class it should be a very distressed party indeed,

because Trinidad and Tobago in the mid-80s is nothing if not a middle-class country, with upper and lower echelons perhaps, but middle class nevertheless. (*TE* 7 December 1986, 8)

The NAR's manifesto allied the party to the current "sweeping away of decadent beliefs and systems" as had happened with the Marcos in the Philippines and Duvalier in Haiti (both in February 1986, when the NAR was launched as a unitary party), and the increased opposition to apartheid in South Africa. In the previous year, Panday, as Leader of the Opposition, had boycotted all the state functions in honour of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II – who had visited Trinidad and Tobago from 1-4 November 1985 – to protest the British Government's refusal to impose meaningful economic sanctions against South Africa. In the House of Representatives on 12 March 1986 Panday also expressed support for protesters who had been beaten by police outside the Queen's Park Oval demonstrating against the English cricket team over what was regarded as their government's lax policies on South Africa.³² The heightened protest against apartheid followed the establishment of Emancipation Day as an annual national holiday on 1 August 1985 (replacing Discovery Day), to commemorate the abolition of slavery in 1834 (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 240, 312, 314).³³

Notably, on the same day that Panday raised the issue of the cricket protesters, the Sexual Offences Bill was being debated in parliament. This could be considered as the most concrete effect of the emerging women's movement in Trinidad and Tobago up to that point. The bill had caused considerable debate – provoking the verbal opposition of

³² Panday's later political party, the UNC, would form part of the Commonwealth delegation that monitored the South African elections on 26-29 April 1994 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, 55).

³³ Trinidad and Tobago was the first country to declare Emancipation Day a national holiday. NJAC had revived annual observations of Emancipation Day in 1973 (Kambon 1999; *TG* 22 July 1999, 8).

Deputy Prime Minister Kamaluddin Mohammed and dividing the PNM Cabinet – surrounding Clause Four, which had proposed that marital rape be made a criminal offence. In response, Women Working for Social Progress (or Workingwomen, formed in January 1985) had organised the various groups who supported the clause into a Sexual Offences Bill Action Committee, adding considerable momentum to the new social movement. In the wake of the controversy the government had established a Joint Select Committee to further consider the bill. After three months re-drafted legislation had been passed with a modified version of the controversial clause (Ghany 1996, 451-4; Mohammed 1991, 45; *Workingwoman* November 1991, 2). In late November 1986, Chambers inadvertently outraged this newly articulate feminist opinion when he tactlessly declared, “I am giving free PNM technical advice; if you want to heckle a meeting, you must have a FAB. All yuh have a FAB? You don’t send 18 men to heckle a meeting. After two minutes they want a beer. You must put women to heckle a meeting” (quoted in Yelvington 1987, 30; Ryan 1989a, 77, 84). (“FAB” stands for “Fat Arse Brigade,” the uncharitable nickname for the PNM’s fervent, mainly African, female supporters, organised in the party’s Women’s League.)

It seems that particularly after the presentation of candidates, all but the most cautious observers and participants³⁴ realised that the PNM could not resist the NAR tide. The PNM itself seemed at times resigned to defeat (Ghany 1996, 463-5; Ryan 1989a, 76-8, 84; Yelvington 1987, 31).³⁵ Despite a full-page PNM advertisement in the *Trinidad Express* (7 December 1986, 13) warning quite prophetically, with good reason, at great

³⁴ David Renwick (*TE* 7 December 1986, 8) believed that there was a possibility of a surprise showing by the PNM, as did Lloyd Best who feared the success of a “last resort to ... primal loyalty” (*TTR* 18/23 December 1996, 2).

³⁵ As early as 1985, the PNM General Secretary lamented “for all practical purposes the party is dead” (quoted in Ryan 1989a, 8).

length and detail, that "THE FACT IS, THERE IS SURE TO BE A POWER STRUGGLE," the same paper carried on its front page the results of a SARA survey indicating that

a majority of those polled believe that even if there would be confusion following a NAR victory, it is still important to vote the PNM out of power. ... The majority of the electorate believe that there will be no confusion and factionalism if the NAR were to win the elections and will govern the country better than the PNM. (*TE* 7 December 1986, 1)³⁶

On 13 December, the NAR's final rally of the campaign attracted to Woodford Square the "largest crowd ever seen there for a political meeting" (*TG* 14 December 86, 1).

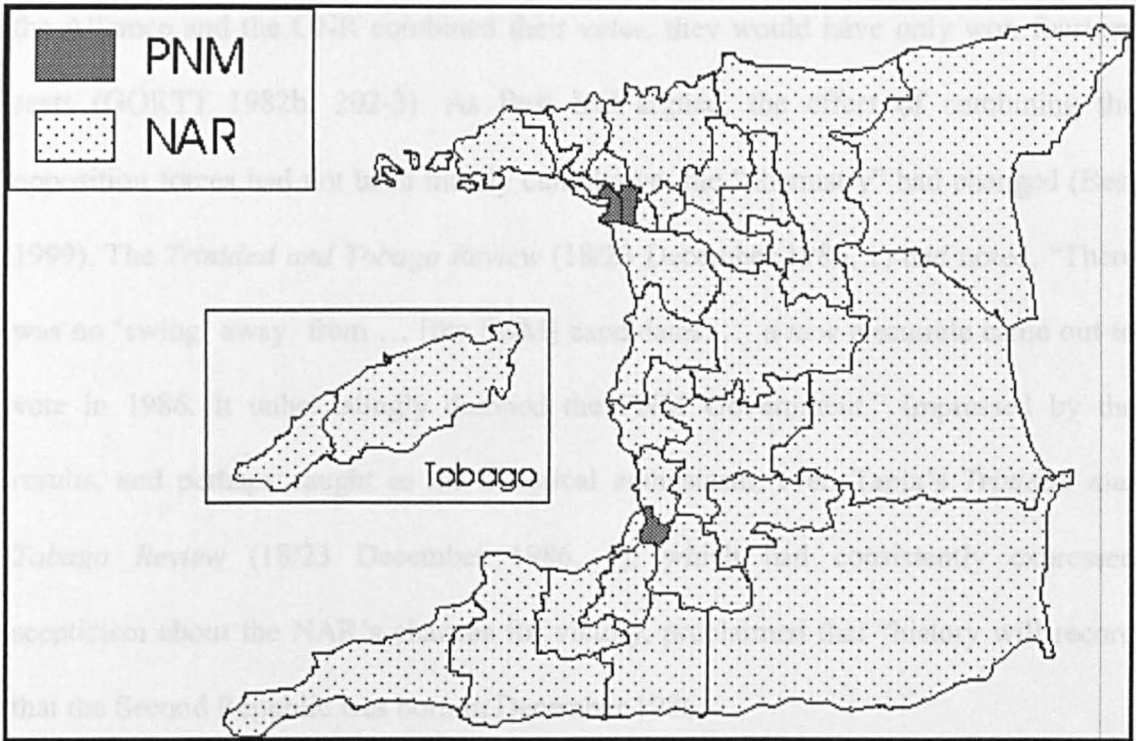
In the elections of 15 December 1986, the NAR achieved a unexpected level of victory, winning in thirty-three of the thirty-six constituencies (see Table 5-6 and Figure 5-2).

Table 5-6. Election Statistics, 1986 General Elections

	Number of candidates	Number of seats won	Total Votes	% of Votes
NAR	36	33	380,029	65.8%
PNM	36	3	183,635	31.8%
NJAC	36	0	8,592	1.5%
People's Progressive Movement	14	0	796	0.1%
Independents	2	0	211	0.0%
Rejected Ballots			4,037	0.7%
TOTALS	124	36	577,300	100.0%

Source: GORTT ([1987], 202-3)

³⁶ Cynically anticipating this enthusiasm, the *Trinidad and Tobago Review* juxtaposed on the front page of its 1 December 1986 issue the almost indistinguishable pictures of the 16 November NAR meeting in Woodford Square and the Tuesday Carnival in February. It quipped, "If ever there were elections that needed to be rigged it is these, for there can be only one satisfactory result on December 16th and that is: a slim margin for either major party – preferably the NAR – and, ideally, at least one seat for the National Joint Action Committee."

Figure 5-2. Distribution of Constituencies by Party, 1986 General Elections

Created by author from GORTT ([1987])

The PNM, who had governed the country for thirty years, winning its largest victory just five years prior, fell spectacularly. With the exception of Patrick Manning in San Fernando East, all incumbents – including George Chambers, Kamaluddin Mohammed, and Errol Mahabir – lost their seats. The three seats that the party did retain – Port of Spain East, Laventille, and San Fernando East – were secured by slim margins of 2,670 votes; 1,251 votes; and 61 votes, respectively (GORTT [1987], 9-15).³⁷

Compared to the 1981 results, the PNM's support had fallen in thirty-four seats,³⁸ losing in total 34,922 votes. The NAR, on the other hand, from its combined amount of

³⁷ Patrick Manning (1999) had opined to the author that had the elections been held one week later only the Port of Spain East seat, won by PNM Youth League leader Morris Marshall, would have been secured.

³⁸ Morris Marshall's Port of Spain East and Overand Padmore's Port of Spain North were the exceptions (GORTT [1987]).

179,276 votes in 1981, had received an additional 200,753 votes in 1986.³⁹ In 1981, had the Alliance and the ONR combined their votes, they would have only won fourteen seats (GORTT 1982b, 202-3). As Best had argued, the effect of combining the opposition forces had not been merely cumulative; the "chemistry" had changed (Best 1999). The *Trinidad and Tobago Review* (18/23 December 1986, 1) had noted, "There was no 'swing' away from ... [the PNM] candidates: ... a new electorate came out to vote in 1986. It unhesitatingly dumped the PNM Government." Impressed by the results, and perhaps caught in the historical enthusiasm, even Tapia's *Trinidad and Tobago Review* (18/23 December 1986, 1), which had consistently expressed scepticism about the NAR's chances for victory, proclaimed that "history will record that the Second Republic was born in December 1986."

The Chambers administration could not sustain either the political or economic gains made during the Williams years. Despite the rhetoric about prudence and restraint, and the recommendations of the Demas Report, the Chambers administration did not seem to act decisively enough. With the fall of oil prices in 1982-3 and 1985-6, the massive increase in current expenditure incurred in 1982 drained the government's resources, much of which had been carefully accumulated in special funds during the oil boom. Chambers was seen as an intellectual failure as well, with the many jokes made about his witlessness on the one hand, and the NAR's seizing of the vanguard position through its rhetoric about new economic management and a new ethnic and social progressiveness on the other. The NAR spectacularly captured, perhaps even nurtured,

³⁹ The overall voter turnout had increased to 65.5 percent (the highest rate since 1966), or an additional 161,884 electors.

the popular mood for change. It was given an unprecedented mandate to govern a country on the edge of yet another significant transformation.

CHAPTER 6

“BETWEEN GOOD INTENTIONS AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION”: THE FALL OF THE NAR, 1987-91

In this chapter we review the NAR term in office, 1986-91. The NAR attempted to implement important reforms in the social, economic, and political climate of Trinidad and Tobago, attracting perhaps the widest cross-section of popular support ever assembled by any political party in the history of Trinidad and Tobago's politics. However, from almost the beginning the NAR administration mismanaged the inevitable political difficulties that any new, reformist administration might expect to encounter. The first major confrontation resulted from Prime Minister ANR Robinson's disagreement with the appointments made by outgoing President Sir Ellis Clarke in March-April 1987. Around this time the first of numerous internal party quarrels emerged. A climax was reached with the expulsion from Cabinet of Deputy Prime Minister Basdeo Panday in February 1988 (ending in his expulsion from the party in October 1988), but internal dissent continued right up to the end of term in 1991. At the same time many nongovernmental organisations, community groups, and trade unions mounted myriad protests against the government's structural adjustment policies, peaking in a nation-wide "Day of Resistance" on 6 March 1989. Social problems such

as divorce, emigration, and crime escalated, and the lowest point was reached when a group of 114 armed members of the fringe radical black Muslim group, the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen, held Parliament hostage for six days from 27 July to 1 August 1990 in an unsuccessful attempt to remove the government. The NAR's major efforts during the term had been directed toward re-structuring the Trinidad and Tobago economy to become more export-oriented and private sector-driven. Evidence of economic success was not readily apparent in 1991 and Prime Minister ANR Robinson had lost the support of many of his members of parliament. In the 1991 general elections the NAR did not win any seat in Trinidad. The PNM, renewed under the leadership of Patrick Manning, secured victory while the NAR break-away party, the United National Congress (UNC), emerged as the official opposition.

"Rough Seas": The NAR's First Nine Months

On 21 December 1986 the NAR responded to its enthusiastic victory with a National Assembly for Reconciliation at the Queen's Park Savannah in Port of Spain, attended by an estimated forty thousand people. Reflecting the "spiritual rebirth" noted by Prime Minister Robinson, the assembly endorsed a National Exercise of Cleaning Up the environment, which was impressively conducted by the "entire population," reportedly, on 17 January 1987 (*TG* 22 December 1986, 1; Yelvington 1987, 32; *NTT* 28 January 1987, 13).

With due ceremony, parliament was opened on 12 January. The Throne Speech delivered by President Sir Ellis Clarke indicated that the government "would put emphasis on honesty, integrity in public life, responsibility, courage, love and the spirit

of compromise" (*NTT* 28 January 1987, 3-4, 9-10; Yelvington 1987, 32). At one point, reportedly, the proceedings were interrupted by Basdeo Panday because there had not been available a copy of the *Bhagvad Gita* upon which to swear – reminding observers that Hindus had become part of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the first time since 1956 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 95; Parris 1990).

In its first twelve weeks, up to the Easter break, the new government enacted a number of important pieces of legislation as part of its fight against corruption (*TE* 19 April 1987, 2). At the first sitting after the ceremonial opening, on 16 January, fourteen reports from the Auditor-General on the accounts of State bodies were laid in the House of Representatives and referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) or Public Accounts Committees. In addition were laid the Prevention of Corruption Bill (debated on 20 March) and the Integrity in Public Life Bill (debated from 20-7 February). On 6 February, the Garvin Scott Drug Report was laid and was debated until 18 February.¹

During this period, a number of Commissions were also formed. Almost immediately upon taking office, senior civil servant, Dodderidge Alleyne, had been appointed to chair a Finances Committee to examine the financial state of the country which, Robinson claimed, was not known in exact terms. At the same time, a Transfer Committee, chaired by the Head of the Civil Service, Eugenio Moore, had also been

¹ PNM Ministers, magistrates, and police officials were supposedly named in the report, but in the public version published by Unique Services only police officers were systematically listed. None of the officers named were charged. However, the Ministry of National Security issued suspension notices of fifty-three police officers of varying ranks. Also suspended from duty were five magistrates whose names were supposed to have been mentioned in the Report. The most notable event in the wake of the report had been the resignation of Police Commissioner Randolph Burroughs (*NTT* 25 February 1987, 6, 10; Ryan 1987, 82; Yelvington 1987, 32). On 16 June 1989, in an address carried on radio and television, Robinson had named five former PNM cabinet ministers who, he alleged, had been drug users and or dealers, quoting from a confidential letter sent to him by Louis Rodriguez, secretary of the Scott

appointed with a mandate to ensure a smooth transition to the new regime (NTT 28 January 1987, 9; Ryan 1989a, 319, 155).

Frank Rampersad, former Chairman of Caroni Limited and BWIA, had been appointed chairman of a Committee established to undertake the reorganisation, restructuring and rationalisation of State Enterprises (NTT 27 May 1987, 4-5). A Commission of Enquiry into projects undertaken by the previous government, chaired by former ULF member, Senator Allan Alexander, had also been formed to investigate the "DC-9" scandal, negotiations with the Tesoro Corporation, the Caroni Racing Complex, the formation of the Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Company and the Iron and Steel Company of Trinidad and Tobago (ISCOTT), the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, importation of narcotics, firearms and ammunition, and involvement in prostitution of women brought in from outside of the country (NTT 25 February 1987, 5).² Giving force to the NAR crusade at this time had been the publication in the *Wall Street Journal* of 12 March 1987 of an embarrassing article implicating former Prime Minister Chambers in a back-room deal with the Tesoro oil company in the 1970s involving a blonde prostitute.

After the Easter break, other reforms included the issue by the Industrial Development Corporation of a Draft Policy on Investment, welcoming foreign capital and affirming the role of the private sector, and the revision for the first time in twenty-one years of the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives (NTT 24 June 1987, 1-6; TG 7 June 1987, 6).

Commission. The *Trinidad Guardian* and the PNM expressed great concern at this "brutal" abuse of privilege (LRRCR 20 July 1989, 3; *Scott drug report* 1986).

Regarding representation, the new government seemed to be more broadly embracing than the PNM. Although the Cabinet was reduced to thirteen members (from twenty-two in the Chambers administration), the mixture of former members of the PNM, Tapia, the ULF, the DAC, and the ONR gave it an impressive air of inclusivity. The new President of Trinidad and Tobago, Noor Hassanali,³ sworn in on 19 March 1987, was a Muslim Indian, as was the Speaker of the House Nizam Mohammed, elected on 12 January. Basdeo Panday, MP for Couva North, Minister of External Affairs, International Marketing, and Tourism, had been named Deputy Prime Minister, considerably enhancing Hindu and trade union presence in the government. Ken Gordon, managing editor of the *Trinidad Express* and member of the board of Neal and Massey, one of the country's three remaining large conglomerates, had been appointed Senator and Minister of Industry and Enterprise. At the same time, radical OWTU president, George Weekes, had been made a Government Senator (*NTT* 28 January 1987, 1-2, 9; *NTT* 25 March 1987, 8; Ghany 1996, 412-4). Worthy of mention, too, was the award of the Trinity Cross on 31 August 1987 (Trinidad and Tobago's twenty-fifth anniversary of Independence) to CLR James – Marxist philosopher, writer, first editor of the PNM's *The Nation*, and co-founder of the WFP for whom in 1966 Panday, Weekes, and MP for Oropouche Trevor Sudama contested elections for the first time (Siewah and Samaroo 1991, 423).⁴ In addition, the NAR had lifted the immigration prohibition on leading Black Power advocate, Trinidad-born Kwame Ture (Stokely

² As with the publication of the Scott Drug Report, the Alexander Commission seems to have resulted in no action taken against anyone (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 318).

³ In 1955 Basdeo Panday left his teaching job at St. Clement's Vedic School to work in the San Fernando Magistracy as a Second Class Clerk to the then magistrate Noor Hassanali (Siewah 1994, 531).

⁴ Two years later, on 31 March 1989 James died in London from respiratory failure. He was buried in Trinidad by the OWTU according to terms laid out in a will drafted in 1985. OWTU president Errol McLeod refused the government's offer of a state funeral, as Robinson was a Cabinet member in the PNM Government which had placed James under house arrest in 1965. Mention had also been made

Carmichael) declared by the PNM Government in 1968 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 393; Ryan 1972, 445).

In addition to the inclusion of previously marginalised personalities, the NAR had legitimised island and ethnic demands. The government had announced that the powers of the THA would be enhanced according to 1980 Tobago House of Assembly Act, and that TT\$27.9 million would be put toward the Scarborough Harbour Development Project (Tobago) (*NTT* 28 January 1987, 14; *NTT* 29 April 1987, 10).⁵

The Foreign Minister of India, Narayan Datt Tiwari, visited Trinidad and Tobago in April 1987, agreed to establish an Indian Cultural Centre (first suggested by Indira Gandhi who visited the country in 1968),⁶ and the two countries signed a cultural agreement⁷ (*NTT* 29 April 1987, 14; *TE* 12 September 1987, 5; Ryan 1989a, 160-1). On 11 April 1987 Prime Minister Robinson and External Affairs Minister Panday ran the first lap of the six-day island-wide marathon organised by the Divine Life Society to observe "Human Dignity Day." Robinson and Panday carried a torch that would eventually be carried around the entire island of Trinidad, performing the Hindu rite of *pradakshana* – circumambulation of a revered object – and beginning the first ever

of Robinson's brother-in-law taking over editorship of the *Nation* after CLR James was expelled from the PNM. Prime Minister Robinson did not attend James's funeral (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 423).

⁵ In 1989, during the proceedings of the Hyatali Constitution Commission, NAR chairman of the THA Jeff Davidson had argued that Tobago's right to secede should be included in the constitution. This did not find favour with most persons, in particular Prime Minister Robinson (*LARRCR* 11 May 1989, 6).

⁶ Premdas (1993b, 154) reports that the Indian Government has made similar gifts to Guyana, Fiji, and Mauritius, three other small countries with large proportions of Indians (52 percent, 59 percent, and 70 percent respectively [*Europa Yearbook* 1986]). According to the 1980 Census, 41 percent of Trinidad and Tobago's population were Indians (*ASD* 1990).

⁷ External Affairs Minister Panday, who had been deeply involved in the matter, also reportedly had initiated a similar venture with the Government of Nigeria, but the arrangements did not seem to be elaborated (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 315).

Caribbean Hindu Conference⁸ (*NTT* 29 April 1987, 3; *TE* 12 April 1987, 9; Ryan 1989a, 158-9). Panday also represented the government at the Indian Arrival Day celebrations on 31 May 1987⁹ (*NTT* 24 June 1987, 11).

The secular legacy of Williams was breached when a new prayer – incorporating the phrase “one love” – had been introduced in Parliament (*TE* 19 April 1987, 9). In addition, Minister of Education Senator Clive Pantin, former ONR member and brother of Catholic Archbishop Anthony Pantin, introduced a prayer and the singing of the national anthem at the beginning of each school day (Yelvington 1987, 32).

This new inclusiveness had been expressed “ideologically” by Dr. Brinsley Samaroo, former DAC member, MP for Nariva, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, and former lecturer in history at UWI, as he sought to elevate the importance of the ancestral cultures of Africa and India in particular, sometimes against the “cultural imperialism” of Europe and North America, as manifested by the very popular television programmes “Dallas” and “Dynasty,” and the comic strips “Mandrake” and “Phantom.” Samaroo posed this approach as a direct challenge to Dr. Williams’s view that there could be no Mother India, no Mother Africa, no Mother England, no Mother China, no Mother Syria or no Mother Lebanon, only Mother Trinidad and Tobago (Yelvington 1987, 32-3, Ryan 1987, 157; Williams 1962a, 279). Expressing a similar view, Panday’s interview with the *Trinidad Express* (30 August 1987, 3, 46-7) on the occasion of Trinidad and Tobago’s twenty-fifth anniversary had been titled, “We are better off as a society of mixed races.”

⁸ Former ONR Deputy Leader, Suruj Rambachan, had been one of the more prominent figures organising the event (*TTR* July 1987, 3).

Perhaps the most memorable phrase emerging from this initial period was made by Archbishop of Cape Town Desmond Tutu who had visited the country from 22-3 May 1987. At the Jean Pierre Complex in Port of Spain, he described Trinidad and Tobago as a "Rainbow Country," a phrase which seemed to be very well received by the government, the media, and much of the population (*NTT* 24 June 1987, 6; *TE* 30 August 1987, sec. 3, 3). The *Trinidad Express* (30 August 1987, sec. 3) used the phrase as the title of its Silver Jubilee Independence Supplement.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the NAR experienced some teething problems at this early stage. Before the Easter break, Brinsley Samaroo had been removed from his position largely, it seems, because of his outspokenness about the effects of American and European "cultural imperialism" and the need for the promotion of African and Indian culture. Journalist David Renwick had congratulated the Prime Minister for his forthright action, and criticised Samaroo for his apparent obsession with "culture," a word that was used "no fewer than thirteen times in the course of one conversation" (*TE* 12 April 1987, 9; cf. Yelvington 1987, 33).

Around the same time, Minister of Works, Settlement and Infrastructure John Humphrey, MP for St. Augustine and former ULF MP, complained that his ministry was being sabotaged by its civil servants and accused Permanent Secretary David Punch by name in the House of Representatives (*TE* 8 March 1987, 9). Soon afterwards, Dr. Albert Richards, MP for La Brea and Minister of Labour, Employment and Manpower Resources, had announced that he was personally unsympathetic to a

⁹ The annual observation of Indian Arrival Day was begun in 1977, and in 1995 it became a national holiday (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 287).

collective Cabinet decision (the removal of COLA), claiming afterwards that he was given "clearance" by his Cabinet colleagues to make public his disapproval of the decision (*TE* 19 April 1987, 9; *TG* 15 March 1988, 15-6).

Elaborating the NAR's commitment to "open government," days after his election in January as Speaker of the House, Nizam Mohammed had indicated that he would combine British and American traditions and would not be "removed from the hurly burly of ... politics," warning,

I intend to be outspoken. When we went to the country during our campaign we said that we were going to have open government and that we were going to have people's participation. I was always opposed to the idea that if someone is a member of a political party, he should enslave himself to the extent that he would compromise strong feelings that he may possess. As a representative of a constituency, I have a very strong moral obligation to those people whom I represent. (quoted in Ryan 1989a, 118)

On 5 May 1987, less than a month after the party met to adopt its unitary constitution on 11 April¹⁰ (*TG* 19 April 1987, 17), at a meeting in Preysal, Couva, Mohammed publicly criticised the government for the lack of Department of Environmental Works and Development (DEWD)¹¹ projects in his constituency of Tabaquite. Mohammed attacked Dr. Carson Charles, former ONR member, MP for St. Joseph, and Minister in the Ministry of Works, Settlement and Infrastructure (responsible for DEWD), calling him a "Johnny-come-lately" to the party (*TTR* June 1987, 3-4).

On 3 June 1987 came the most serious rebellion, at a meeting of the Couva North constituency at the ATS&GWTU's Rienzi Complex, with Minister Panday (Deputy

¹⁰ For over one year, the party did not have a constitution recognising its unitary status.

Leader of the NAR and MP for the constituency) and Minister of Energy, Kelvin Ramnath (MP for Couva South and former ULF member). Prime Minister Robinson apparently had decided to depart from the schedule by preceding Panday's feature address and leaving immediately afterwards. Panday followed Robinson's speech with a highly charged, lengthy oration differentiating the government from the party, criticising the former for changing "nothing," and thereby continuing the alienation felt by all the groups in the country who were not in office – making specific reference to the availability of information on loans and housing, and the granting of scholarships. Panday asked his constituents "to join in the struggle which we began 21 years ago [in the WFP] – the struggle for fairness." He told his audience,

if therefore you hear me get up in Parliament and make statements that are apparently derogatory of the government, at a party group meeting or wherever, it is not because I have abandoned the government. It is not because I want to break up the government. That has nothing to do with it. It is because we promised an open government and we must never let one act of discrimination go by, because when you let that happen the second, the third and the fourth will also go by. And you can't do anything later on. (*TTR* July 1987, 11-3).

Reminiscent of Lloyd Best the year before, Panday told his audience, "I assure you that I am not rocking the boat. On the contrary, I am steadying the ship" (*TG* 7 June 1987, 1).¹²

Playing down the importance of the dissent, at the NAR Annual Conference on 26 July 1987 Robinson declared that the party was nearing the end of the transition period. He

¹¹ The government's labour-intensive make-work programme, known colloquially as "ten days" after its ten-day employment rotations, historically located in north Trinidad's "East-West Corridor" conurbation

¹² Robinson was reported to have remarked around this time that the ship of government was sailing through rough seas, because of an empty treasury, and it was to be expected that some of its crew would become seasick and "vomit on each other." Panday later rejoined that the nausea on the good ship NAR was the result of the stench coming from the ship's state rooms (*TE* 14 February 1988, 8).

outlined a twenty-seven point list of the government's achievements, assured the party that the NAR had now settled, and that soon the period of recovery and reconstruction would begin (*TG* 27 July 1987, 1). Less than a month later, on 19 August, Arthur Sanderson, MP for Fyzabad, publicly complained that he had "lost confidence" in Joe Pires, the Chairman of the government's National Planning Commission, over the decision to reduce the number of work-days for DEWD workers (*TE* 20 August 1987, 48).

The NAR's internal bickering was accompanied by dissent from outside the party. The first area of contention surrounded the 1987 Budget, presented by Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and The Economy ANR Robinson on 23 January 1987. Introduced less than one week after the National Clean-Up campaign, the speech outlined the challenges faced by the country due to its virtually empty treasury. Robinson called upon "every patriotic citizen to rally to the task of national recovery and reconstruction," invoking the "new spirit that our people have displayed, with our new commitment, our new patriotism, and our new resolve" (Robinson 1987, 26).

One of the government's more controversial budget measures included the suspension of the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) and merit increases which, together with a 5 percent pay reduction for Ministers of Government, would save the government TT\$490.8 million (Robinson 1987, 20). The trade unions, which had begun to close their organisational and ideological divide in 1982,¹³ strongly opposed the proposal and organised a "National Day of Protest" in Woodford Square (Yelvington 1987, 32). In

¹³ On 19 July 1982 Labour Day celebrations were held jointly for the first time by the radical CPTU and the moderate Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress (TTLIC). In December 1983 the Joint

April 1987 the government compromised by paying a reduced COLA to the lowest levels of public servants and the Prime Minister apologised publicly for having to make the cuts in the first place. The Public Services Association (PSA), however, continued its court action for the full restoration to all public servants (*NTT* 29 April 1987, 15).

On 14 February 1987 the UK's Channel Four broadcast a film titled, "The Gathering Storm," hosted by Jan Mottley, wife of Wendell Mottley, former PNM Minister in the Chambers administration. The programme, which warned of social unrest in the wake of economic decline, provoked complaints and inquiries from the Trinidad and Tobago government, members of the public, and Trinidadians resident in the UK (*TE* 8 March 1987, 5; *NTT* 25 March 1987, 10).

Soon afterwards, from 14 March to 19 April 1987, Prime Minister Robinson found himself in open conflict with the outgoing President Sir Ellis Clarke. Retired Appeal Court judge, Noor Hassanali, had been nominated by the government to replace Clarke when his term of office was completed on 14 March. It seems, however, that Clarke had expected that he would be asked to continue as President, and was piqued that he had found out about Hassanali's nomination through the press.¹⁴ On 31 December 1986, without consultation with the new prime minister, Clarke had appointed well-known civil servant James Bain to the Public and Police Service Commissions; and the day Clarke left office he appointed former Chief Justice Cecil Kelsick to the Judicial and

Trade Union Grouping (later renamed Concerned Group of Trade Unions) had been formed (Kiely 1996, 159-160).

¹⁴ A similar complaint had been raised in at least one other instance when Minister of Energy Kelvin Ramnath had remarked that he only learned about the transfer of well-respected permanent secretary Trevor Boopsingh from his ministry through an announcement in the press (*TE* 8 March 1987, 9).

Legal Service Commission, both to the great displeasure of Prime Minister Robinson¹⁵ (*NTT* 28 January 1987, 15; *TG* 19 April 1987, 1; Ryan 1989a, 108-14; Ryan 1999b, 190-1).

On 27 March 1987 Attorney-General Selwyn Richardson (Attorney-General in the 1976-81 PNM administration) introduced a Constitutional (Amendment) Bill which would automatically revoke the appointment of Independent Senators and members of Service Commissions retroactive to 1 January 1987 (i.e., appointments made by Clarke before the expiration of his term of office). All things done or purported to be done by the appointees would also be invalidated. Academics (including Selwyn Ryan), the PNM, Tapia, the CPTU, the TTLC, the press, and the general public protested that the bill was "dangerous," fearing that the constitution would be tampered with whenever a government felt hampered by it (*TG* 13 March 1987, 1; *TE* 12 April 1987, 25; *TTR* June 1987, 5; Ryan 1989a, 114-7).

On 19 April 1987, it was announced in the press that Prime Minister Robinson had been advised by Attorney-General Richardson that the appointments of Bain and Kelsick were null and void due to the lack of proper consultation. However, President Hassanali did not accept letters of resignation sent to him from members of the Public Service Commission. Subsequently, a Presidential Commission, headed by former chief Justice Sir Isaac Hyatali, had been appointed to undertake a comprehensive review of the 1976 Republican Constitution. Pending the commission's report no further action

¹⁵ Robinson even went so far as to suggest at the NAR Conference held on 11 April that Clarke was "fascist" because of the disrespect shown to the elected Head of Government (*TG* 19 April 1987, 17).

was to be taken on the constitutional amendment bill (*NTT* 27 May 1987, 11; *TG* 19 April 1987, 1; Ryan 1989a, 117).¹⁶

Meanwhile, general dissent increased. In May 1987, Lloyd Best had appeared on an *Express* breakfast panel, maintaining his critical stance on the NAR government's performance (*TE* 31 May 1987, sec. 2, 6-13). These views were consistently elaborated in Tapia's *Trinidad and Tobago Review* which criticised the NAR's "expansionary adjustment" and its inability to deal with the complex political and economic challenges facing the country (e.g., *TTR* June 1987; July 1987).

At street level, the trade unions and the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen, a radical Port of Spain based group of recently converted African Muslims,¹⁷ organised a number of demonstrations in July and August. The protests were concentrated in Port of Spain but also occurred in San Fernando and Arima. The largest one, it seems, was staged outside of Parliament on 7 August 1987 by an estimated one thousand persons. The protesters blamed the government for the high cost of living, job and wage cuts, and their actions attracted other groups such as farmers' organisations, DEWD workers, and PNM MP for Port of Spain East Morris Marshall (*TG* 27 July 1987, 1; *TE* 8 August 1987, 4; *TE* 9 August 1987, 5; *TE* 13 August 1987, 1; *TE* 23 August 1987, 1, 3).

¹⁶ No constitutional reform resulted from the Report of the Hyatali Commission, which submitted its thirty-nine page report to President Hassanali on 1 June 1990 (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 214; *LARRCR* 26 July 1990, 3).

¹⁷ Ryan (1991, 84-122) provides a good account of the formation and growth of the Jamaat, and more generally, African conversion to Islam from the 1950s. Also see Mustapha (1997).

On 23 August 1987 Prime Minister Robinson announced that he would meet representatives of the PSA, the CPTU¹⁸ and the TTLC, as well as the Protective Services and DEWD, exhorting, "This is the time for planting, not marching" (*TE* 24 August 1987, 1). Robinson expressed amazement that "all this marching was taking place now and not when the PNM was in power, building massive structures, ruining the country and leaving almost no foreign reserves."

During this time the Independence calypso competition had been held. The crown was won for the first time by the calypsonian Cro Cro, who would emerge as a scathing opponent of the NAR (and later the UNC) articulating an unapologetic pro-African position, described by Trinidadian theologian and cultural critic Burton Sankeralli, not without sympathy, as "tribal attack" (*TE* 24 August 1987, 5; *TE* 3 February 1996).

Such discontent at such an early stage had been remarkable. Leading Tapia member Allan Harris harshly commented,

The easy passage we allowed the National Alliance for Reconstruction speaks volumes about our political innocence. It will not do simply to turn now on the Government in anger. We need to face up squarely to some unflattering realities. What disability was it on our part which prevented us, for fifteen, or even twenty years, from replacing a PNM Government in which we had long ceased to believe?

What condition of being and array of circumstances could have brought us, in five short months, to our current state of disaffection with the party we had determined was the long-sought replacement for the People's National Movement and which we then proceeded to sweep into office in the most emphatic and triumphant manner imaginable?

We betray in our political behaviour what must be the collective equivalent of the shifting moods of a manic-depressive personality. A major

¹⁸ The NAR had fully recognised the radical CPTU as a legitimate trade union organisation, unlike the previous PNM regime which had only given the TTLC full recognition (CPTU 1991, 1, 42; Ryan 1989a, 342-3).

problem of our political constitution must be the state of our collective mind.
(*TTR* June 1987, 3)

Amidst this controversy, local government elections had been scheduled for 14 September 1987. However, the NAR were not the only party facing trouble at the time. The PNM had been undergoing a convulsive transformation. After the election defeat, Chambers had resigned as Political Leader of the PNM and Errol Mahabir announced his retirement from active politics. Patrick Manning had been appointed Leader of the Opposition entitling him to appoint six senators – Augustus Ramrekersingh (formerly of Tapia), Ken Valley, Robin Montano, Donna Prowell, Winston Moore, and Dr. Keith Rowley (*NTT* 28 January 1987, 8, 11). The senators were fresh entrants to Parliament, forming an essential part of Manning's effort to create a "new PNM." In February 1987 Manning had been elected Political Leader of the PNM, defeating Dr. Aneas Willis by 572 votes to 127 (*NTT* 25 February 1987, 10). In his acceptance speech Manning advocated a "purge" of the party's "undesirable qualities and attitudes," exhorting party members to "understand clearly that the political life of Trinidad and Tobago is basically in a state of transition." Manning proclaimed that the PNM was a "government in exile" – an exile whose purpose was to "build the new party and to create the new society" (*TG* 18 February 1987, 9). Some of the "old guard" of the PNM expressed resentment at their marginalisation and what they argued was Manning's unconstitutional, and unwise, attempts to by-pass them (*TG* 29 April 1987, 1; *TG* 23 March 1987, *TE* 29 May 1988, 8). Manning responded in turn, sometimes harshly, calling the dissidents "stumbling blocks" and a "recalcitrant minority" (*TE* 4 May 1987). Some questioned whether the party could survive. Although the press welcomed Manning's initiative (*TE* 27 May 1987, 8; *TG* 19 February 1987), the PNM could not easily free itself from blame for the country's dismal financial state. Less than one

month before the local government elections were held, Frank Barsotti, former permanent secretary in the Ministry of Finance, announced at a panel discussion organised by the Economics Association on 17 August 1987 that the former government concentrated on "regime survival" in the oil-boom years, "spending money on projects for the primary purpose of staying in power" (*TE* 20 August 1987, 8).

Reflecting on the situation, the *Trinidad and Tobago Review* perceptively argued,

An enduring dream of many of our citizens has been the achievement by us of a working two-party political system.

That our dream remained unfulfilled for so long was probably a consequence of our failure to see that our multiplicity of parties was a political condition directly related to the character of our society. To rescue ourselves from a utopian hankering after a simple, "Westminster-model", two party system, we were required first to achieve a more sophisticated understanding of the social mould which shapes our politics.

Leave aside for the moment whether a two-party system is a goal worth pursuing. The truth that may be emerging is that we are as far away from that goal as ever we have been. What prevailed for years during the reign of the PNM was what may be distilled as a one-and-a-half parliamentary party system. That description excludes the many extra-parliamentary parties. Now, notwithstanding the triumph of the National Alliance for Reconstruction, or perhaps because of it, we seem to be back with a one-and-a-half party system. (*TTR* August 1987, 2).¹⁹

Despite the dissent, the NAR had secured a convincing victory in the local government elections, which had a voter turnout of 41 percent, significantly higher than the 32.9 percent voting in the 1983 local government elections (see Table 6-1).

¹⁹ This brings to mind Dr. Williams 1955 Woodford Square speech, "The Case for Party Politics in Trinidad and Tobago," where, after humorously cataloguing the existing political individualism, he declared, "The first prerequisite of party politics in Trinidad and Tobago is the establishment of one good party" (Williams 1981, 108).

Table 6-1. Election Statistics, 1987 Local Government Elections

	Number of candidates	Number of seats won	Total Votes	% of Votes
NAR	125	79	250,055	58.5%
PNM	125	46	137,754	39.3%
People's Popular Movement	14	0	360	0.1%
Progressive Workers Democratic Movement	3	0	90	0.0%
Independent	13	0	5,584	1.6%
Rejected Ballots			1,917	0.6%
TOTALS	280	125	350,760	100.0%

Source: GORTT ([1988c], 462-8)

This would be the last triumph in Trinidad for the NAR, however: the rest of its term would be marked by continuous, even dramatic, political, economic, and social deterioration.

"Change and Exchange": The Expulsion of CLUB 88, 1987-8

The NAR victory did not quell the discontent within the party.²⁰ Karl Hudson-Phillips, appointed chairman of BWIA (NTT 25 February 1987, 3), acted as Minister without Portfolio while Robinson had been touring North America in October 1987. During this time Hudson-Phillips had written a Cabinet note criticising the irresponsibility of Minister John Humphrey for warning that social unrest would occur if the government did not release money to his Ministry of Works, and Junior Finance Minister Trevor Sudama (MP for Oropouche, former ULF member, member of the 1988 Budget's Co-ordinating Team headed by the Prime Minister and also member of the two-man political team associated with pre-budget discussions) for publicly declaring that he

²⁰ Ryan (1989a, 127-78) gives a detailed account, focused on the racial dimension, of the many and convoluted arguments during this period.

would not defend the 1988 budget as he had no input into its preparations. Panday and Ramnath were also rebuked (*TE* 25 December 1987, 1).

On 21 November 1987 at the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee awards ceremony came another set of bold statements against the government by Panday and his former ULF colleagues. Panday had reportedly read his statement earlier in the day to a meeting of the NAR parliamentary arm before leaving the meeting. NAR members, including Basdeo Panday's brother Alderman Subhas Panday, had tried to dissuade the Deputy Leader from delivering the statement, following him to the venue at the Sevilla Club (*TE* 23 November 1987, 1). In the speech, Panday charged that "the history of discrimination, injustice, and inequality" had continued under the NAR despite all hopes for change. He passionately urged his audience to consider the purpose of forming the NAR and winning elections, and if they were unsatisfied with the results from the party's gaining of office, he urged them to be bold enough to take action. He argued,

... We are so accustomed to the political monolith that we are unable or afraid to think of another kind of political structure. You either rule like Eric Williams and the PNM, or you do not rule at all. The most troublesome problem in Trinidad and Tobago today is the conflict between those who want change and those who do not. And that has nothing to do with the PNM or the NAR. It is much deeper and wider than that. In fact the conflict crosses party lines.

After one year of the new government in office, the line between those who want meaningful change and those who only want exchange is becoming clearer and more distinct. That means the future is easily predictable. There will be a new regrouping of forces which will transcend the distinction of race, colour, and creed. It will be a long, drawn out battle, but in the end the forces of change will succeed. Because history has always been on your side. (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 417)

Ryan (1989a, 134) remarked that Panday, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and International Trade, sounded "as if he were still Leader of the Opposition."

On 22 November 1987, the NAR Parliamentarians issued a press release that called for the Prime Minister to "use his full powers under the Constitution and the law to achieve discipline, cohesion and teamwork at the level of Cabinet." On 26 November, Robinson called on the entire Cabinet to submit their resignations so that he could "reorganise the Government in the light of all the circumstances." Three days later the Cabinet changes were announced. The most important changes included John Humphrey's dismissal from the Cabinet, the stripping of International Marketing and Tourism from Panday's Ministry,²¹ Ramnath's move from the Ministry of Energy to Public Utilities,²² and the inclusion of three new Cabinet members (Ryan 1989a, 140-2).

The rebellion intensified with the re-shuffle. Even during the swearing in ceremony, Panday and Ramnath refused to shake the hand of the Prime Minister. Panday, Ramnath, and Humphrey continued to complain about "one-man rule," "PNM-ism," the prominent role given to technocrats with long histories of service under PNM governments, not being given reasons for their change of status, and in the case of Deputy Leader Panday, not being consulted in such matters (Ryan 1989a, 143).

²¹ Panday's Tourism portfolio had been added to Ken Gordon's Ministry of Enterprise and Industry. Panday had quipped that he was now a "one-third minister" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 186).

²² Ramnath retorted that he should be called the Minister of Water, Telephones and Electricity since only "3 of the 14 public utilities were put under his control" (Ryan 1989a, 142).

The split in the government had become uglier with the press implicating itself in the disputes. One of the most notable press interventions had been the publication in the *Trinidad Express* on 15 December 1987 of an article titled, "The ULF Grab for Power" written by an anonymous "Technocrat." In his polemic the technocrat accused, not without justification, the "former United Labour Front elements," the "East Indian-owned" weekly papers, and "East Indian journalists" in the daily press of conducting a "smear campaign" against "African technocrats" Dodderige Alleyne, Eugenio Moore, Trevor Farrell, and Gordon Draper.²³ He accused the ULF group of "hypocrisy and ingratitude" when they claimed that it was they who put in the hard work to remove the PNM, and warned of the *personal*, as opposed to communal, motivations for power (Siewah and Arjoosingh 1998, vol. 1, app., 12-8). The article was reminiscent of another contentious article published in the *Trinidad Express* (19 April 1987, 24-5), titled, "The Indianisation of the Government," with its super-heading, "Trinidadians Still Fear Take-over of the State by East Indians." The articles were more alarming considering that the Minister of Enterprise and Industry, Senator Ken Gordon (who was firmly on Robinson's side in the dispute), had been the most powerful man behind the *Express* from 1969 until his appointment as Government Senator in 1986.

The NAR National Council had subsequently appointed a committee chaired by Jaigobin Nanga to "identify the problems in the party and to determine the causes thereof and to make recommendations for their solution" (quoted in Ryan 1989a, 227). The committee met for the first time on 23 December 1987. While it was conducting its investigations, two major incidents occurred. First, on 31 January 1988 a meeting of the

²³ It should be noted, however, that Indian Cabinet members and MPs Winston Dookeran (formerly of the ULF), Brinsley Samaroo, and Beau Tewarie opposed the Panday faction, while the ULF

dissidents had been called to further articulate their case. The second incident, related to the first, had been the withdrawal of two members of the Nanga Committee because of their attendance at the meeting of dissidents (*TE* 14 February 1988, 8). On 8 February 1988 Panday, Ramnath, and Sudama were expelled from the Cabinet (Ryan 1989a, 179). The *Express* subsequently published an article on 10 February by its editor-in-chief, Owen Baptiste, asking, "What Is Panday Really Up To?" Panday defiantly responded in the House of Representatives on 12 February,

It is easier to get some people out of the PNM than to get the PNM out of some people. ... Not only will I not stand by and see another PNM emerge, but I shall not sit idly by and see my country sold out to Neal and Massey, of whom Mr. Baptiste and his former boss (Ken Gordon) are the servants, agents and/or licensees, but more specifically the instruments by which such sale is to be effected.

But the saving grace, Mr. Speaker, is that not only Mr. Baptiste knows of the schemes to sell out our patrimony to Neal and Massey and/or their agents, but the workers know and the other businessmen know too. They both live in fear of the great gobbler. But the workers and the businessmen know I am on their side and no amount of propaganda in the *Daily Express* or elsewhere will change that. (Samaroo and Moonilal 1991, 45)

In early March 1988, after receiving memoranda and hearing testimony from the Prime Minister and thirty-five members of the House of Representatives and the Senate,²⁴ the Nanga Committee had submitted its report to the NAR General Council. The Committee report was balanced and wide-ranging, arranged under headings which included "Operations and Functioning of the Party," "Relationship Between Party and Government," "Political Education of Parliamentarians," "Discipline and Ethics," "Communications," "Role and Power of the Transition Team," "Indian Cultural

dissidents prominently included John Humphrey, a "local white," although widely considered an eccentric.

²⁴ Karl Hudson-Phillips reportedly did not appear before the Nanga Committee, whom Ken Ramchand accused of being too lightweight for such an important matter (*TG* 30 March 88, 9).

Centre," "Scarborough Deep Water Harbour," and "Race Relations" (Ryan 1989a, 227-236; *TG* 10, 11, 15 March 1988). The report acknowledged merits on both sides of the dispute – on the one hand that the dissidents failed to air their grievances in an acceptable, disciplined, and constitutional manner, and on the other hand that there had been real grounds for dissent regarding the marginalisation of an important constituency in the NAR government's decision-making (specifically regarding the selection of Cabinet, the appointment of ambassadors, the reassignment of permanent secretaries, major policy decisions, and the firing of Ministers). It accused both sides of a lack of communication and unnecessary aggravation. The party leadership was particularly criticised for failing to take early corrective action and allowing the party to divide from the executive level right down to the constituencies. The Committee had recommended that the party seek reconciliation with the dissidents "with a view to the eventual reinstatement of Mr. Panday to the Cabinet," in order "to truly reflect the political reality of the country" (reprinted in *TG* 11 March 1988, 13).

The General Council had not reached a final decision on the report and fixed a follow-up meeting for 17 March 1988. On 16 March Panday publicly launched CLUB 88 – the Caucus of Love, Unity, and Brotherhood – to act as a lobby group within the NAR to "save the party." The following day, the NAR National Council rejected reconciliation by a vote of seventy-seven to fifty-two and instead a motion to appoint a disciplinary tribunal was passed. On 27 March the nine-member disciplinary tribunal headed by Anthony Smart (MP for Diego Martin East, and former General Secretary and founder-member of the ONR) had been established to consider thirty-one charges against Panday, Ramnath, Sudama, Humphrey, and Raymond Pallackdharrysingh (MP for Naparima and Assistant General Secretary of the NAR) for "serious acts of indiscipline

inimical to the interests of the party" (*TE* 16 May 1988, 3; Ryan 1989a, 239; Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 419-22).

On 29 April 1988 Panday moved a parliamentary motion of no confidence against Prime Minister Robinson (*TG* 3 April 1988, 1). It was unsuccessful. On 15 May the five members were suspended from party activity in a reportedly disordered and contentious vote of acclamation that had been carried one hundred to seventy-eight (*TG* 17 May 1988, 16).²⁵ Nizam Mohammed, Jensen Fox²⁶ (MP for Port of Spain North, formerly of the ONR), and member of the Nanga Committee Chan Sookhoo each expressed in the press their disappointment with the suspensions, while Prime Minister Robinson had indicated his satisfaction that "the party has taken control of its affairs" (*TG* 16 May 1988, 1; *TE* 17 May 1988, 1, 3; *TE* 29 May 1988).²⁷

Subsequently, CLUB 88 held a press conference in which Panday called the suspension "tantamount to expulsion" and accused Robinson of having planned the expulsion of the former ULF elements possibly before the elections, "so that he could exercise absolute and total control over the party and government." He continued, "We feel sorry for him but cannot forgive him for the tragedy which he is inflicting on the nation." Robinson was accused of trying to fracture the society along racial lines "so that he could create a political base for himself in Trinidad" (*TG* 20 May 1988, 3, 18).

²⁵ It had been rumoured that CLUB 88 had planned a motion of censure at the forthcoming NAR Annual Conference (*TE* 17 May 1988, 8).

²⁶ On 8 May 1988 Fox was reported in the press to have appealed to Hudson-Phillips to intervene in the impasse (Ryan 1989a, 242).

²⁷ Some CLUB 88 supporters had questioned why Ministers Lincoln Myers, Pamela Nicholson, Selwyn Richardson, and Albert Richards, who were also publicly critical, were not also disciplined (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 188).

Relations between the leadership and other NAR members not part of CLUB 88 were also becoming strained. In June 1988, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Food Production, Marine Exploitation, Forestry and the Environment Eden Shand had been removed from office for making an unauthorised call to the nation to destroy the crops of illegal squatters (*TE* 10 July 1988, 21; *TTR* July 1988, 4); in July 1988, President of the Senate Michael Williams voted against the government's Free Zones Bill 1988 (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 183); and on 29 August 1988, the NAR Port of Spain North constituency, in a hastily organised meeting reportedly attended by only nine out of a possible ninety-four persons, passed a motion of no confidence against Prime Minister ANR Robinson, calling for fresh elections in three months. The motion was piloted by executive member of the Constituency Council, JD Ramjohn, founding member of both the ONR and the NAR. MP Jensen Fox, who had been present, abstained from voting.²⁸ Shortly afterward, members of the NAR executive had persuaded the constituency, including Fox, to pass a retracting motion. However, the constituency of Couva South subsequently passed a similar no confidence motion, while members in Barataria/San Juan, Tunapuna, Port of Spain South, and Sangre Grande threatened to do the same (*Trinidad and Tobago Mirror* 9 September 1988, 1, 32; *TE* 11 September 1988, 8, 20-1).

On 16 October 1988, on a rainy day at the Aranguez Triangle one week before Panday's term as Deputy Leader of the NAR was to expire,²⁹ CLUB 88 held a rally of

²⁸ Fox had also abstained in the motion no confidence against Prime Minister Robinson in the House of Representatives in April (*TE* 11 September 1988, 20).

²⁹ The NAR had called its Annual Conference for 23 October 1988, instead of February 1989 when it was due. The term of Political Leader was to officially end at the Conference (whenever it was held), and after elections the new Political Leader would appoint his two Deputies (*TG* 10 July 1988, 6).

thousands³⁰ – including, apparently out of curiosity, Morris Marshall, Kamaluddin Mohammed, John Eckstein, John Donaldson, and Wendell Mottley from the PNM; members of the diplomatic corps; Selwyn Ryan; Acting Minister of Finance and the Economy Selby Wilson; and calypsonian Deple who had performed at the cultural programme that preceded the feature address – seeking a mandate to launch a new political party that would “reincarnate” the “original NAR” (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 428-449; Ryan 1989a, 218). On 22 October, after much argument and debate, the NAR Annual Conference, with a lone dissenting vote from Senator Amrika Tiwary, ratified the expulsion of Panday, Ramnath, and Humphrey, finalising the split in the government after less than two years in office (Ryan 1989a, 220-3; Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 457).

Reflecting on the political situation, Sunity Maharaj in the August 1988 edition *Trinidad and Tobago Review* conducted extremely illuminating interviews with Peter Farquhar, Vernon Jamadar, and Kamaluddin Mohammed, revealing uncanny similarities between Trinidad and Tobago’s political present and its past. Kamaluddin Mohammed had observed that since the formation of the PNM, opposition parties were “earlier forms of the NAR.” Maharaj suggested that Basdeo Panday “look into the mirror of his soul and see if he doesn’t find Bhadase Maharaj there. Didn’t Bhadase, too, unconditionally deliver the same constituency of interests and hopes to a coalition – that of the DLP? Both men placed the interests of their constituency on the unhallowed altar of office with no safeguards whatsoever. ... Both succumbed to the manipulation of a view that they weren’t fit material for high office.” Following Peter

³⁰ Claims have varied from five to ten thousand (Ryan 1989a, 218) to thirty thousand (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 430).

Farquhar, Maharaj also argued that both the DLP and the NAR gambled on "image" rather than allowing the politician to prevail.³¹ Robinson (with his Tobago retreat), like Dr. Capildeo (with his London retreat), had been acclaimed leader through the manipulation of public and party opinion, while the "two competitors sat back and allowed it to happen for whatever reason and with whatever calculation." She surmised that if the DLP won in 1961, the weakness of Capildeo would have had made the DLP end up the same way that the NAR did.³² The reason that a weak politician could win elections in the first place, Farquhar maintained, was that people in Trinidad and Tobago have always voted "not *for* somebody, but *against* somebody. ... Nobody ever imagines that the person you put in could be worse than the person you are keeping out." Maharaj concluded, "The *Middle Passage* [by V.S. Naipaul] still holds true. This is a place where 30 years after the PNM boasted it had brought party politics to the country, there are still no parties, mainly individuals" (*TTR* August 1988, 17-31).

Selwyn Ryan similarly concluded

It is now becoming apparent that the 30 years of stable PNM politics might well have been an interlude, an aberration in our political development and that the tradition of indiscipline and "jammety"³³ which characterised the politics of the parties in opposition in those years was in fact the norm to which we have now returned. (*TE* 11 September 1988, 8)

³¹ Honorary Secretary of the DLP, FE Brassington [1975: 87-105], had made a similar point earlier, regretting his role in the displacement of Bhadase Maraj for Dr. Capildeo.

³² Surendranath Capildeo, son of Simbhoonath and nephew of Dr. Rudranath, also noted the similarity of the NAR and the DLP disputes, right down to the court case over the right to use the party symbol (*TE* 21 May 1988, 9). The same could have been said, as well, about Panday and Shah's court battles over the use of the ULF symbol (Samaroo and Arjoonsingh 1998, 31).

³³ A "jammette" is a Trinidadian colloquialism for an unruly, often lower-class, woman of loose morals and ill-repute.

*"Prime Minister Robinson Has Been Overthrown": The Road to the Attempted**Coup D'État, 1989-90*

The loss of Panday, Ramnath, Humphrey, and Sudama did not significantly affect the NAR parliamentary majority. However, SARA polls released in the *Trinidad Express* (26 June 1988; 10 July 1988) stated that 58 percent of the population wanted fresh elections and that, broken down by religious group, only between 11 and 21 percent were satisfied with the NAR's performance, and 56 to 70 percent expressed outright dissatisfaction with Robinson's performance as Prime Minister.

The NAR, however, dominated the THA elections in November 1988, winning eleven of the twelve seats. Although the total number of voters between 1984 and 1988 decreased from 19,786 to 16,720, the NAR was able to increase its share of the ballots cast to 63.5 percent, from the DAC's 56.6 percent in 1984 (GORTT [1989], 17; *LARRCR* 8 December 1988, 6).

In addition to its internal problems, the NAR faced considerable extra-parliamentary opposition, seemingly from every angle and quarter: trade unions, women's groups, religious bodies, community organisations, and business interests. Much of the criticism was directed at the NAR's economic policies. Trade unions, UWI academics, and community groups saw the measures as being disproportionately harsh on workers, favourable to big businesses (both local and foreign), and generally against the national interest.

The government had planned to formulate a medium-term macro planning framework and established a National Planning Commission, chaired by Prime Minister Robinson,

but mostly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Planning and Mobilisation (under Winston Dookeran, MP for Chaguanas and former ULF member). The Commission's various sub-committees met with the private sector, the public sector, the university and the labour movement. Draft documents were made available in July and August 1988 on which the public commented at consultations held throughout the country (GORTT 1990b, i). The first draft programme explicitly articulated a change from an inward-looking to an outward-looking strategy, fostering a climate "conducive to investment activity in general and the growth of exports in particular" while at the same time setting out "to bring the lowest quartile of the population into the mainstream of the economic life of the society in a productive and proactive, rather than passive and dependent relationship" (GORTT 1988b, 80, 85).

As part of this effort, Minister of Enterprise, Industry and Tourism Senator Ken Gordon piloted the government's Free Zones Bill in July 1988. The bill aroused significant opposition, with President of the Senate, Michael Williams, voting with the Opposition and Independent Senators against it (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 183; *TTR* July 1988, 4). The issue became another rallying point for dissent, even before the bill had been presented in parliament. On 26 May 1988, Workingwomen were central in the formation of the Women Against Free Trade Zones Committee,³⁴ bringing together individuals and groups to organise broad-based popular opposition to the establishment Export Processing Zones (*Workingwoman* July/August 1988, 1-4; *TG* 10 July 1988, 18; *TE* 10 July 1988, 8; *TE* 26 June 1988, 27; *TE* 11 September 1988, 15). On the other side, those with pro-market leanings had expressed impatience with the government

³⁴ Workingwomen were also the driving force behind the Sexual Offences Bill Action Committee.

over the slow pace and irresolution of its economic reform programme (*TG* 1 May 1988, 14; *TG* 10 July 1988, 14; Ryan 1989a, 261-3).

The government continued its strategy for reversing the economic decline, and in August 1988 it had announced a number of new measures, including devaluation of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar relative to the US dollar from TT\$3.60 to TT\$4.25, the introduction of a voluntary termination of employment programme, and a number of tax increases and public spending cuts (Ryan 1989a, 257-8). On 11 September 1988, Prime Minister Robinson embarked on a three and a half week trip to Brussels, Cyprus, Paris, Berlin, and London to negotiate access to IMF finance facilities to deal with the country's balance of payments problems, among other things (*TE* 11 September 1988, 1; *TG* 11 September 1988, 1). On 16 November 1988, the government submitted a letter of intent to the IMF requesting a fourteen-month stand-by arrangement in the amount of SDR 99 million (GORTT 1988a, 7).³⁵ In the 1989 budget speech delivered on 16 December 1988,³⁶ Robinson announced that Trinidad and Tobago had been degraded by the World Bank, roughly five years after its graduation, in contrast to its earlier status as net creditor to World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the Caribbean Development Bank, and as soft lender to other Caribbean

³⁵ The approach to the IMF was made more controversial by the resignation on 18 May 1988 of Davison Boodhoo, a Grenadian national, who had been part of IMF teams that had visited Trinidad and Tobago in 1985, 1986, and 1987. Boodhoo's resignation was written in six parts, in protest at the "high-handed manner in which the fund conducted its operations," the inordinately high level of conditionalities desired by the Fund, undue pressure placed on Trinidad and Tobago to enter formal stand-by arrangements, and, to achieve the Fund's ends, the deliberate exaggeration of key indicators, including the Relative Unit Labour Cost (RULC), the fiscal deficit, unpaid bills, decline in private sector bank deposits, and government transfers to the public enterprises sector (*TE* 10 July 1988, 2-9, 17-21).

³⁶ This date was ANR Robinson's birthday, about which he seemed to have a numerological attachment (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 469). In addition to presenting the budget on this day, the 1986 NAR victory was won on the eve of his birthday (as was Eric Williams's victory in 1956), the 1990 Diego Martin by-election was called on 17 December (since 16 December was a Sunday), and the 1991 General Elections were scheduled on his birthday.

governments.³⁷ The 1989 budget was presented as the budget in which the recovery programme would start in earnest, after spending 1987-8 setting the country's "economic house in order." The ability of the country to endure the hardships "in the midst of apparent political confusion, social disequilibrium and economic crisis," Robinson argued, "would be the true measure of our adulthood as a nation." Trinidad and Tobago, he declared, had come to the end of the era when the state was seen as a "tireless mother," and stood at the threshold of another (Robinson 1989, 11, 36-7, 39).

Under the initiative of Minister Ken Gordon (who would vacate his position in government in February 1990 to resume his position as CEO of Trinidad Newspapers Ltd., publishers of the *Trinidad Express* [Gordon 1999]), the government had attempted to significantly reduce the burden of the state sector. After the government covered TT\$2.5 billion of the ISCOTT's losses and debt-servicing, the company – which between 1982 and 1986 had accounted for a loss of TT\$1,132.7 million, or 77 percent of the net loss of the energy-based industries (Pantin 1988, 33) – had been leased to the Ispat Group of India in October 1988. In August 1989 Ispat agreed to operate ISCOTT for ten years, and renamed the mill Caribbean Ispat Limited (CIL). Ispat invested TT\$17 million in the enterprise and made lease payments of TT\$46 million per year. The following year, in 1990, the mill declared a profit for the first time since its start-up in 1981 (EIU 1998a, 27). It was the first major turnaround at Point Lisas. In December 1989, 49 percent of the Trinidad and Tobago Telephone Company (established in 1968) had been sold to Cable and Wireless of the US, and the company was re-christened the Telecommunications Service of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT) (Forde and Sargeant

³⁷ Between 1970 and 1983 Trinidad and Tobago provided TT\$1,601.4 million to CARICOM governments and regional institutions (GORTT 1983, 86).

1991; GORTT 1995, 6). In 1988, a foreign bank had been permitted to repurchase previously divested stock in its local subsidiary, reversing the policy of localisation that Robinson himself had piloted as PNM Minister of Finance in 1966³⁸ (Forde et al. 1997, 435; Robinson 1986, 30).

New foreign investment also started to arrive. In November 1989 Conoco and Pan West, two US oil companies, began construction of a US\$95 million gas-processing plant at Point Lisas, to extract propane and butane from natural gas. The plant, Phoenix Park Gas Processors, was the first of its kind in Trinidad and Tobago and began operations on 15 June 1991 (EIU 1998a, 28).

In 1989, the government undertook comprehensive tax reform, achieving "significant reduction in the rate of corporation tax, coupled with measures to increase business savings and to channel these savings into productive investment," while introducing in the 1990 budget a Value Added Tax (VAT) of 15 percent on most consumption items (GORTT 1990b, 77; GORTT 1993c). On 14 March 1990 the government submitted another letter of intent to the IMF requesting another twelve month stand-by arrangement in the amount of SDR 85 million (50 percent of quota), and possible access to contingency financing up to a maximum amount of SDR 42.5 million (GORTT 1990a, 4). In May 1990, the government repealed the Alien Landholdings Act (introduced in 1921 to limit expatriate ownership, and extended in 1969 to prohibit foreign ownership in business), replacing it with a more friendly Foreign Investment

³⁸ Robinson, Deputy Leader of the PNM, was removed from the Ministry of Finance in Williams's 1967 Cabinet re-shuffle, which many viewed as a major reason for his resignation from the PNM in 1970 (Ghany 1996, 265-6). Robinson's 1970 resignation speech, protesting a meeting called to discuss disciplinary measures to be taken against him, is reprinted in *Caribbean Man* (Robinson 1986, 129-30)

Act. The new Act restricted the legal definition of a foreigner so that investment could be easily undertaken by residents from countries with reciprocity agreements, including citizens of CARICOM countries. The Act also removed restrictions on foreign ownership in private companies, once the investment capital was brought in from abroad (Hilaire 1992, 27; *LRRCR* 26 July 1990, 3).³⁹

The reform measures provoked trade union and other activists on a number of levels. The non-payment of COLA and the 10 percent reduction in wages to public servants announced in the 1989 budget came after months of dispute and increased the fervour of the trade union protest. In July 1988, five months before the 1989 budget was presented, the Industrial Court ruled that the government had to re-instate COLA in addition to a salary increase of 2 percent. The government, however, warned that timely implementation of the wage award would be precluded by the tight fiscal situation, and appealed the decision (*TTR* July 1988, 4; *GORTT* 1988a, 7). Furthermore, in August 1988, at the same time as the government announced the currency devaluation, it had delayed its payments to public servants (*TE* 11 September 1988, 31; *TG* 11 September 1988, 7; *CPTU* 1991, 43).

Between 6 March 1989 and 13 July 1990 the CPTU engaged in seventeen protests, demonstrations, rallies, marches, and public meetings, and issued fifty-six public statements on alternative economic strategies, government legislation, privatisation, and strikes, among other things (*CPTU* 1991, 18-21, 29-30). Notably, Government Senator George Weekes (who had supported the 10 percent pay cut), and the new radical trade

³⁹ Another notable indication of Trinidad and Tobago's increasing acceptance of ties to other countries had been the amendment to the Citizenship Act, assented to on 29 July 1988, permitting dual citizenship for Trinidad and Tobago born or descended nationals (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 175).

union leadership (many of whom, like OWTU President Errol McLeod [ULF MP for Oropouche 1976-81] and David Abdulah [son of Anglican Archbishop Clive Abdulah], were members of the Committee for Labour Solidarity [CLS], formed in November 1981 from the old Shah faction of the ULF) had been extremely critical of each other's positions on the NAR government, whom the CPTU described as "anti-worker" (CPTU 1991, 18, 41; MOTION 1989).

On 6 March 1989, the CPTU and the TTLC had organised a one-day "general strike," asking workers to stay home as protest against the government's economic measures and its "lack of consultation." The CPTU claimed that the "strike united almost the entire population and gave them confidence in their unity and ability to not only say NO to Structural Adjustment, but also to build for themselves a better society" (CPTU 1991, 30). The PSA claimed that 80 percent of its members stayed away from work. In contradiction, Reginald Dumas, permanent secretary to the Prime Minister, submitted attendance figures showing that 70.1 percent of public servants had showed up to work, except in the Ministry of Education which had a 15 percent turnout. On 7 March, Minister of Education Senator Clive Pantin submitted his resignation due to the exceptionally low turn out at his Ministry and in the schools. Robinson refused Pantin's resignation (*TE* 8 March 1989, 1-3; *TE* 9 March 1989, 3). On 22 April the trade unions had organised in Port of Spain a "March Against Hunger," in which Basdeo Panday (president of the ATS&GWTU since 1973) was one of the speakers on the platform.⁴⁰ In response to these events, on 2 May 1989 a National Consultation with the private

⁴⁰ Later that day, Panday had been invited to speak in the poor, black, urban, PNM stronghold of Laventille, the first time he had ever done so (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 253-62).

sector, government, and the labour movement had been convened at Chaguaramas (CPTU 1991, 44; Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 367).

Meanwhile, ten days after the "Day of Resistance," on 16 March, CLUB 88 celebrated its one year anniversary at the Rienzi Complex in Couva, adopting the party name, the United National Congress (UNC), with Basdeo Panday named interim political leader. Six weeks later, on 1 May 1988, the UNC won the local government by-election in Guaico/Cumuto in the St. Andrew/St. David county council, with 1,216 votes for the UNC, 631 for the PNM, and 544 for the NAR. On 22 July 1990, the UNC elected its executive officers at its Inaugural Assembly at the Chaguaramas Convention Centre (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 450, 453, 471).

The radical groups continued to organise. On 12 November 1988, the CLS had been "mandated" to mobilise "in the workplaces among the workers and farmers; in the communities amongst the youth, students, housewives, small business people, self-employed, patriotic intellectuals and professionals" to discuss the draft programme of its new political party, the Movement for Social Transformation (MOTION), which convened its founding congress on 10 September 1989, with David Abdulah (Education Officer in the OWTU) as political leader (MOTION 1989). Four months later, on 4 January 1990, partly motivated by early factionalism in MOTION, the Joint Trade Union Movement (JTUM) was founded, and at a Conference of Shop Stewards and Branch Officers, the JTUM was commissioned "to unite with other sections of the society to deal effectively with the NAR's Economic Policies" (CPTU 1991, 10, 45). As a result, on 8 February 1990 representatives of twenty-nine organisations – sixteen unions, one sports and culture club, the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action, the Writers Association of Trinidad and Tobago, the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen,

political organisations, youth groups, and others⁴¹ – convened to form the Summit of People's Organisations (SOPO) to "mobilise the people" and to "obtain a mandate from the population to press ahead with our demands and economic alternatives" (SOPO [1990]).

During this time, the NAR were caused further parliamentary embarrassment with the resignation of President of the Senate Michael Williams on 8 March 1990, complaining that as President he was unable "to speak out against upsetting issues such as the Service Commissions and the questionable contract awards by the Central Tenders Board." Williams further declared that the NAR as a party distinct from government should not be afraid to remove the "whole crew" from the Prime Minister on down (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 183-4).

Meanwhile, the NAR also attempted to continue its project of cultural and social inclusiveness. In October 1989, Minister Without Portfolio Dr. Bhoë Tewarie had organised a lecture series, "Let Us Discover Ourselves," to commemorate the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean. Jennifer Franco spoke of the European contribution; Suren Capildeo spoke on the Indians; Dr. Ralph Henry on the Africans; Peter Harris on the Caribs and Arawaks; Dr. Robert Lee on the Chinese; and Annette Rahaël on the Syrian-Lebanese people. The lectures were surrounded by controversy as the African spokespersons apparently protested consistently that the other groups did not sufficiently acknowledge the exploitation and oppression of Africans, and other groups expressed feelings of marginalisation by what Franco once

⁴¹ A mimeographed resolution, however, listed thirty-two organisations, including the UNC, PNM, Tapia, and Women Working for Social Progress (Summit 1990).

referred to as the "Africanisation" of Trinidad. Capildeo's Indian lecture was prematurely ended as various conflicting spokespersons sought to dominate the microphone during question period (Siewah 1994, 232-7, 295).

Another basically well-intentioned NAR initiative that had turned sour was the attempt to introduce a National Service Scheme aimed at the twenty-five and under population.⁴² Both the DAC and Tapia had mentioned similar plans in their 1976 manifestos, on 3 April 1984 the PNM Government had set up a committee to consider its establishment, and national service had been included in the 1986 NAR manifesto. From 28 December 1989 a series of meetings had been held to discuss the proposed scheme, on the initiative of Lincoln Myers, Minister of the new Ministry of National Service. Myers argued that national service would help to reverse "the disintegration of family life; widespread teenage pregnancy; the alarming incidence of crime and drug abuse; random violence in the streets; [and the] growing alienation of ... youths [who have been] betrayed by so-called exemplars of public trust" (Premdas 1996c, 86-7; Siewah 1994, 271). The social situation in the country had indeed deteriorated significantly, as seen in statistics on crime, homicide, suicide, divorce, and migration (see Table 6-2). Boldly underlining this decay, in 1988 a net migration of 44,222 persons had been estimated by the Central Statistical Office, an amount greater than the population of Port of Spain (42,605) recorded in the 1990 census (ASD 1997).⁴³

⁴² According to the 1980 census, 60 percent of the population were under twenty five years old (ASD, 1990).

⁴³ Around this time, many Indo-Trinidadians had claimed refugee status in Canada, allegedly on the grounds of racial persecution. The Canadian Government might have been open to such claims because of the racially motivated anti-Indian coups in Fiji in May and October 1987.

Table 6-2. Indicators of Social Breakdown, 1981-90

	1981	1990
Total Reports to the Police (excluding offences against traffic laws)	38,889	65,138
Homicide	33	77
Suicide	59	170
Number of Divorces as a proportion of the number of marriages	10.4%	18.2%
Net Migration	-3,168	-20,172

Sources: ASD (1987; 1997)

Support for national service came from the Hindu Seva Sangh, the Hindu Prachar Kendra, the Hindu Academy (whose Pundit Ramcharan Gosine was a member of the eight-man National Service Committee), Dr. Patrick Solomon, Tapia activist Hamlet Joseph, *Guardian* and *Express* columnists, Hillview College Students, and the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force. On the other side, the SDMS seemed the most vigorously opposed to the plan. At a national consultation organised by the SDMS on 3 March 1990 at which Minister Myers, Basdeo Panday, Patrick Manning, Archbishop Pantin, and Suren Capildeo were guest speakers, two discussants from Grenada, Winston Crowe and Gerry Romain (political prisoners under the 1979-83 People's Revolutionary Government), argued that in Grenada, "There were no checks and balances to prevent abuse of the system, there was no room for protest. Hence the cover-up of mistreatment, where 11 year old girls lost their virginity to the deflowering parties" (quoted in Siewah 1994, 270). The fear of "douglarisation"⁴⁴ seemed to be the grounds for the most passionate objections to the scheme, raising in the process many questions about pluralism, nationalism, and racism.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ A *dougla* is a person of mixed African and Indian descent. Statistics have not been kept on such mixtures since the 1946 census.

⁴⁵ Premdas (1996c, 94-5) claims that Myers's marriage to an Indian woman became part of the background to the debates.

The ambiguous statements about whether the scheme would be, or eventually become, compulsory, residential, and/or gender mixing; distrust of government statements; and scepticism about whether in fact national service could foster patriotism (the negative case of Guyana was cited as a counter-example) added to fearful rumour and speculation. The IRO, columnists with the *Express* and the *Guardian*, the weekly paper the *Bomb* (owned by Satnarine Maharaj, Secretary General of the SDMS), the Muslim Co-ordinating Council, Dr. Selwyn Ryan, human rights lawyer Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, the PNM, and the UNC opposed introduction of national service mainly on the grounds that not enough discussion had occurred to relieve the anxieties of those opposed to it. After much heated exchange in the press and a period of lapse, on 18 February 1991 the National Service Scheme was launched as a voluntary, low-profile programme.⁴⁶

During this period, the NAR also continued its campaign to recover money lost through corruption during the years of PNM rule. On 5 July 1988 the Trinidad and Tobago Government filed a claim of TT\$500 million in the Supreme Court of Ontario, Canada against the estate of John O'Halloran for breaches of trust and fiduciary obligations between 1968 and 1985 (*TG* 10 July 1988, 1, 5). In March 1991, ten years after the death of Eric Williams, TT\$29.6 million (Cdn\$8 million) had been awarded to the Trinidad and Tobago Government (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 317).⁴⁷

On 23 July 1990 Prime Minister Robinson opened an apparently heated debate on the Tesoro Report, whose laying in parliament some considered to be a breach of

⁴⁶ Premdas [1990] and Siewah (1994, 269-85) discuss the event in good detail.

⁴⁷ In 1990, the government was awarded damages of TT\$12 million by a New York court in a case against the Tesoro oil company for the bribery of O'Halloran (*CI* July 1995, 2).

Parliamentary privilege because of the legally questionable nature of the allegations against former members of the PNM government. On 27 July, the third day of the debate, Leader of Government Business in the House Joseph Toney (MP for Toco/Manzanilla) was interrupted at 6:00 p.m. by forty-two armed members of the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen who had come to "overthrow" the government (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 4, 6, 22).⁴⁸

At the same time, seventy-two other insurgents took over TTT (the country's lone television station at the time)⁴⁹ and Radio Trinidad (the country's only privately owned radio station) on Maraval Road, and drove a car-bomb into the Police Headquarters obliquely across from parliament. The total number of hostages taken, according to one estimate, was sixty-one (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 84). In Parliament, one report counted the Prime Minister, six Cabinet Ministers and ten MPs, along with journalists and public servants, as hostages.⁵⁰

That evening Imam Abu Bakr,⁵¹ the leader of the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen, had delivered two television addresses, one at 7:00 p.m. (during the "Panorama" evening news time slot) and the other at 10:30 p.m. Bakr announced that a "coup" had occurred, that "Prime Minister Robinson had been 'overthrown,'" that Robinson and his cabinet were

⁴⁸ 27 July 1990 was the first day of the Islamic year (Bloeser 1992, 294). *Trinidad Under Siege* (1990), put together by the *Trinidad Express*, collects twenty-two articles written at the time of the attempted coup, giving an excellent and broad view. Ryan (1991) provides a detailed account of the convoluted background to the insurrection.

⁴⁹ Among the leaders of attack on TTT was Omowale Muhammed, a former NUFF member formerly known as Andy Thomas. As a NUFF "guerilla," Thomas was convicted for the murder of a policeman but received a presidential pardon (Bloeser 1992, 283; *TE* 1 August 2000).

⁵⁰ Women not in the Cabinet and workers were allowed to leave. Attorney-General Anthony Smart had escaped when he was mistaken for one of these workers (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 25).

⁵¹ Abu Bakr was a former police officer, born in an Anglican home, and originally named Lennox Phillips (Ragoonath 1993, 33).

under arrest at gun point at that very moment, and that the prime minister would "be put on trial." The Imam indicated that "the last straw that broke the camel's back" had been the government's announcement on 25 July 1990 that it would use TT\$500,000 of the money recovered from the Tesoro and O'Halloran cases to erect a statue to the late Gene Miles, a public servant who died in 1972 and had fought against the so-called "Gas Station Racket" in 1965.⁵² In the later broadcast, Bakr announced himself as "leader of the revolution," bemoaned the country's lack of medicines which the Jamaat could have supplied the government if it were allowed to, abolished the seven-month old VAT, and called for new elections in ninety days (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 33-4).

During the 10:30 p.m. broadcast, the TTT signal had been jammed from the army base at Camp Ogden on Long Circular Road, three miles away from parliament. Ministers Myers and Pantin, who were among those members of government not present in parliament at the time, and Army Colonel Ralph Brown were able to briefly let the nation know that the government was still in charge.

That evening, Anglican priest Canon Knolly Clarke – a fellow member of SOPO with the Jamaat – had entered parliament to negotiate with Bilaal Abdullah, who had been in charge of the Muslimeen at the Red House. The next morning, eight hostages were released, including three women and MP for Diego Martin Central Leo Des Vignes, who had been shot in the ankle. Shortly afterwards, Canon Clarke had emerged with Minister Dookeran and a list of demands.

⁵² Incongruously, it was widely known that Miles was a lover of O'Halloran's as well.

With Dookeran released, a "Cabinet meeting" was called at Camp Ogden that morning, including Acting President Emmanuel Carter, Minister of Energy Senator Herbert Atwell, Minister of Works, Infrastructure, and Decentralisation Dr. Carson Charles, Clive Pantin, Lincoln Myers, Chief of Defence Force Staff Colonel Joseph Theodore, and Anthony Smart.⁵³ Shortly after the meeting, at 10:30 a.m. the acting president declared a State of Emergency, with a nation-wide curfew announced shortly afterward. In addition to Camp Ogden, the Holiday Inn and the Trinidad Hilton in Port of Spain acted as government secretariats and information centres.

Undoubtedly to the chagrin of Bakr, the population – including members of SOPO – did not rise up to support his cause. Instead there had been widespread looting and destruction of property along the "east-west corridor" of north Trinidad, from Carenage in the west to Arima in the east (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 48).

The army, unlike on 21 April 1970,⁵⁴ was firmly on the government's side. On 29 July one person had been rescued from Police Headquarters, on 30 July Radio Trinidad had been recaptured, and on 31 July one Muslimeen member surrendered at TTT (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 76-8).⁵⁵

⁵³ Other members of parliament not at the Red House were Jensen Fox, Government Senators Fyard Hosein and Alloy Lequay, Speaker of the House Nizam Mohammed, President Noor Hassanali, Basdeo Panday, and Patrick Manning. Ministers Brinsley Samaroo and Bhoë Tewarie returned to Trinidad on 30 July from trips abroad, while Minister of External Affairs and International Trade Sahadeo Basdeo stayed at the Eleventh CARICOM Summit in Jamaica to keep in contact with other regional heads of government (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, *passim*).

⁵⁴ Ironically, a younger brother of 1970 mutiny leader Raffique Shah, Feroze Shah, had been one of the Muslimeen's six Indian insurgents (Ryan 1991, 111-2). Also not without irony, three months before the coup attempt, Prime Minister Robinson, who resigned from the PNM in 1970 in protest at its poor handling of the country's social and economic problems, declined an invitation to deliver the feature address at a conference on the "1970 Black Power Revolution: 20 Years Later" held on 19-21 April 1990 at the UWI (Pantin 1991, 64, 82).

⁵⁵ Robinson had apparently been shot and beaten by the Muslimeen after instructing the army, via a radio inside the Red House, to "attack with full force" (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 111-2).

On the night of Monday 30 July, from inside the besieged Red House, Prime Minister Robinson announced on radio to the BBC and to the Caribbean News Agency that he had agreed to a list of six demands that:

1. He step down as Prime Minister
2. Other Ministers sign a statement supporting Winston Dookeran as Prime Minister in an interim government
3. The President act within his authority but on the advice of the interim Prime Minister
4. There be elections in ninety days from the date of signing the agreement
5. A Government of National Unity be formed, involving the heads of parties and including Imam Yasin Abu Bakr, leader of the Islamic insurrection
6. The rebels would be granted an insurrection amnesty (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 68-9)⁵⁶

Prime Minister Robinson, who had been shot in the ankle and beaten badly in his face, was released on 31 July. At 2:15 p.m. the next day, Emancipation Day, Abu Bakr and the Muslimeen had surrendered unconditionally⁵⁷ (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 82). Initial government figures had reported 30 killed,⁵⁸ 150 wounded, and that TT\$200 million would be needed to rehabilitate businesses: 102 business outlets were affected by looting, 20 buildings were destroyed by fire, and 27 were severely damaged (*LARRCR* 30 August 1990; 4 October 1990). On 13 August, Bakr and 111 members of

⁵⁶ Although it was not mentioned in the list of demands, the motivation for the Muslimeen's actions has been widely understood as part of a land dispute with the government that can be traced back to 1966 (Ryan 1991, 84-122).

⁵⁷ Whether an agreement (and an amnesty) was in fact signed and how morally, even if not legally, binding such an agreement would be was raised by Selwyn Ryan (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 69-72) and Basdeo Panday (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 190) among others. Government officials had declared that the amnesty was invalid because it was signed under duress (*LARRCR* 30 August 1990, 2).

⁵⁸ Among those killed was MP Leo Des Vignes who died in Port of Spain General Hospital on 1 August from a gunshot wound in the ankle inflicted on 27 July. Minister of Justice and National Security Selwyn Richardson was shot in the ankle but survived (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 78).

the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen⁵⁹ were charged with twenty-two criminal offences, including treason and murder (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 121).⁶⁰

The NAR's Final Year, 1990-1

The general population did not support the coup,⁶¹ but NJAC, the CPTU, OWTU, SOPO, and MOTION refused to condemn the Muslimeen, and instead saw the episode as a fulfilment of their "warnings" about the government's structural adjustment policies. (Tapia had no reservations about denouncing the action.) Selwyn Ryan and other commentators had called for elections within six months (Ryan 1991, 245, 322-332). The NAR had one more year to fulfil its term in office.

On 10 August 1990, in the temporary chamber set up at the Central Bank auditorium, the government tabled a motion to extend the state of emergency for another three months. The motion was supported by the opposition PNM, but not by the UNC, who (in addition to noting the irony that Robinson opposed a similar measure in 1970) supported only a one month extension so that local government elections, due in September 1990, could be held before the 1991 general elections.⁶² On 5 September the life of the county councils was extended for one year, at which time they would be re-

⁵⁹ The youngest member charged was fourteen years old (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 122).

⁶⁰ In 1991, *Caribbean Quarterly*, published out of the Mona, Jamaica campus of the UWI, put out a special double issue in broad sympathy with the attempted coup called "The 1990 Muslimeen Insurrection in Trinidad and Tobago: Its Causes and a Measure of its Heroism."

⁶¹ In a SARA poll conducted in September-October 1990, 75 percent of the sample thought the Muslimeen were wrong to attempt to overthrow the government by force, although 60 percent sympathised generally with the espoused social goals proclaimed by Bakr on TTT (Ryan 1991, 225).

⁶² It has been widely claimed that when told about the coup, Panday responded, "Wake me up when Abu Bakr finish" (Ryan 1991, 247). This flippant and lackadaisical attitude had been condemned by the *Trinidad Express* (*Trinidad under siege* 1990) among others. Although the UNC did condemn the

organised into entities known as regional corporations. Panday criticised the move as "an abuse of parliamentary privilege." On 10 September, Basdeo Panday, whose UNC had a total of six MPs as opposed to the PNM's three, was confirmed by President Hassanali as Leader of the Opposition, giving Panday the power to name six senators – Dr. Prakash Persaud, Wade Mark, Robert Amar, Salisha Baksh, Dr. Ralph Khan, and Mootilal Moonan (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 187-95, 457). On 9 November 1990 the NAR again extended the State of Emergency by one month, this time without the support of either the PNM or the UNC (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 189). It is difficult not to imagine that the emergency was greeted with relief by the NAR, who were able to govern without public demonstrations during the period. For example, SOPO had faded by the end of 1990.⁶³ Similarly, MOTION, which was plagued by internal problems from its launch, witnessed the resignation of six of its twelve executive members on 24 April 1991.⁶⁴

The NAR did not escape, however. On 16 December 1990, a by-election was held in Diego Martin Central to fill the vacancy left by Leo Des Vignes. The PNM, which had been re-organising itself since 1987, showed its resilience as former PNM senator Ken Valley won the seat with 5,278 votes; NAR senator Clive Pantin received 4,201 votes; the UNC's Trevor Belmosa 675; and NJAC's Aiyegoro Ome 329 (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 458). Pantin, who had resigned his positions in the Senate and as

coup, up to the present time, neither the UNC nor the PNM have commemorated with the NAR the anniversary of 27 July.

⁶³ In the author's copies of the minutes of SOPO meetings, the last on record was 12 September 1990, at which UNC MP for St. Augustine John Humphrey was present.

⁶⁴ Interview in 1994 with Cecil Paul, CPTU, JTUM, OWTU, and MOTION executive member, conducted for the author's M.Sc. thesis (Meighoo 1994, 46).

Minister of Health in order to contest the seat, subsequently announced that he was quitting politics (*LARRCR* 24 January 1991, 7).

After the by-elections the NAR experienced further distress. MPs Kenneth Butcher (Barataria/San Juan), Jensen Fox, Theodore Guerra (Port of Spain South),⁶⁵ Arthur Sanderson (Fyzabad), and Eden Shand (St. Ann's West) asked Robinson to step down, with Butcher suggesting that Winston Dookeran replace Robinson. Butcher and Shand, in addition, resigned their junior minister portfolios. Prime Minister Robinson had poorly retorted that these men were having personal problems and were "mental" cases (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 459, 111; *LARRCR* 24 January 1991, 7; Ryan 1989a, 245-6). The following month, in January 1991, MP for Arima Gloria Pollard declared that she would not be contesting for the NAR in the next elections (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 111). A little later, on 21 July 1991, Shand dramatically cut his NAR party card in parliament and announced his resignation from the party declaring, "I still hold the view that the political leader is more of a liability than an asset and I do not think it has anything to do with harsh decisions. It has to do with the manner in which the decisions were made" (*TE* 22 June 1991, 1). Shand's announcement were reportedly greeted with thumps of approval from his government colleagues. He declared himself an independent and later stated that he "was now free." In the 26 July sitting of parliament Shand went on to link Robinson to the "ULF Grab for Power" article published three-and-a-half years earlier, and claimed that Robinson had fired him his position as parliamentary secretary in June 1988 to give the appearance that Panday's suspension in the previous month had not be racially motivated. Robinson had protested that those

⁶⁵ Guerra was a prosecutor in the 1971 court martial proceedings against the army mutineers, and was the first person to be shot by NUFF (Meeks 1999).

were not the facts. At a public meeting on Wrightson Road in Port of Spain, Robinson lashed out at "damn useless" MPs (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 111-2). In October 1991, Arthur Sanderson had also resigned from the party.⁶⁶ By November 1991 seven leading NAR MPs had declared that they would not contest in 1991, including Minister of Education Gloria Henry (MP for Arouca South), Minister of Food Production Brinsley Samaroo, and Deputy Speaker Anselm St. George (MP for San Fernando East) (*LARRCR* 7 November 1991, 2).

The government, however, continued to follow its programmes as best it could against the seemingly continuous opposition: internal, opposition, and extra-parliamentary. In terms of its social programme, the government had passed the Domestic Violence Act in 1991 (*Workingwoman* November 1991, 8), and symbolically, Prime Minister Robinson visited India and Nigeria⁶⁷ in the same year (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 53). The major efforts of the NAR Government, however, were directed toward its economic recovery programme. In September 1990, the government published *Restructuring for Economic Independence: Medium Term Macro Planning Framework, 1989-1995* (GORTT 1990b). In the midst of its troubles, the government were given something of a blessing when on 2 August 1990, the day after Bakr surrendered, Iraq invaded Kuwait. This had the effect of raising the average price of oil that year to US\$20.60 per barrel, 27.2 percent higher than the 1989 average and the highest yearly average price since 1985 (US\$28.00 per barrel), the year the oil shock occurred.

⁶⁶ In 1990 Sanderson had been freed from charges of assault against a woman, but the charges sullied his reputation (*Trinidad under siege* 1990, 28; *LARRCR* 7 November 1991, 2).

⁶⁷ In Nigeria, Robinson was bestowed the title Chief Olokun Igbaro of Ife.

The 1991 Budget, presented on 12 December 1990 by new Minister of Finance Selby Wilson (MP for Point Fortin), had been nicknamed the "Santa Claus Budget" by the NAR during the Diego Martin by-election campaign, and included the removal of the 10 percent salary cut, payment of TT\$10 million in arrears since 1983 to sugar workers, and a promise not to return to the IMF.⁶⁸ Patrick Manning sceptically called it a "Saddam Hussein Budget" (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 68-9). By the end of its term in 1991, the NAR could boast of several important economic developments (see Table 6-3).

Table 6-3. Selected Economic Indicators, 1987-91

	1987	1991
Crude Oil Prices (US\$/barrel)	\$17.30	\$17.50
Crude Oil Production (millions of barrels per day)	155.2	144.1
Current Oil Revenue (TT\$ million)	\$1,958.0	\$2,717.0
Total Revenue (TT\$ million)	\$5,232.7	\$6,796.8
Current Oil Revenue (% of Total Revenue)	37.4%	40.1%
Direct Taxes on Individuals (as % of Total Direct Taxes)	33.7%	26.0%
Indirect Taxes (as % of Current Revenue)	22.2%	33.0%
Total Expenditure (TT\$ million)	\$6,480.7	\$6,847.3
Total Expenditure (as % of GDP at market prices)	37.5%	30.6%
Current Expenditure (as % of Total Expenditure)	86.9%	89.1%
Gross Capital Formation as % of Real GDP	14.2%	13.0%
Overall Surplus/Deficit (TT\$ million)	-\$1,248.0	-\$50.4
Overall Surplus/Deficit (as % of GDP at market prices)	-7.2%	-0.2%
Overall Surplus/Deficit on the Balance of Payments (US\$ million)	-\$249.9	-\$332.2
Other Exports (TT\$ million)	\$741.2	\$2,210.5
Foreign Direct Investment (US\$ million)	\$33.1	\$144.1
Net Official Foreign Reserves (TT\$ million)	\$284.9	\$3.4
Import Cover Ratio (months)	0.8	—
Total Debt to GDP Ratio	51.0%	56.8%
GDP growth at constant 1970 prices	-4.6%	3.1%
Unemployment Rate	22.3%	18.5%

Source: CBTT (1993)

⁶⁸ Between February and December 1990, the government had signed eight debt re-scheduling agreements in order to avoid "debt trap" (LRRCR 25 January 1990, 3).

After seven years of successive decline, real GDP had once again shown positive growth, starting with 1.5 percent growth in 1990. The efforts at diversification seemed to have borne fruit, with "other exports" (i.e., other than crude petroleum, petroleum products, fertilisers, methanol, sugar, cocoa, coffee, and citrus) reaching their highest levels ever. (Previously, the highest value recorded was TT\$663 million in 1982). Foreign Direct Investment also recovered, peaking at US\$148.9 million in 1989, the highest level since 1982 when the value was US\$211.0 million. In 1989, the balance of payments deficit was reduced to its lowest level (TT\$136.0 million) since 1981, when there had been a surplus of TT\$569 million. In addition, in 1991 the fiscal deficit had been put to its lowest level since 1983, when the government had surplus measuring 12.2 percent of GDP (Central Bank 1993).

The recovery might be explained by the rise in oil prices, however, in which case the achievement would be less significant.⁶⁹ Oil prices fluctuated from a low of US\$13.40 per barrel in 1988 to US\$20.60 per barrel in 1990, and in 1991 current oil revenue reached a seven-year high of TT\$2,717 million.

Despite the positive signs, the economic base showed definite weaknesses. Net Official Foreign Reserves were very low, running into a TT\$23.8 million deficit in 1988. In 1989 the total debt to GDP ratio reached its highest level up to that time at 60.4 percent. Investment, measured in terms of Gross Capital Formation, reached its lowest level ever in 1988, measuring 9.7 percent of real GDP. (The lowest recorded Gross Capital Formation figures before the 1987-91 period were 17.7 percent in 1969, and 17 percent

⁶⁹ It should be noted, however, that in 1990 the petroleum sector grew by 1.7 percent in constant 1970 prices, while agriculture grew by 18.7 percent. In 1991, the figures were 0.7 percent and 6.8 percent respectively (Central Bank 1993).

in 1986.) Unemployment, too, was at its highest level ever in 1987 (Central Bank 1993).

In terms of the government's commitment to divestment, although divestment in ISCOTT and TSTT were important, the state enterprise sector had grown from sixty-six enterprises with a shareholding value of TT\$2 billion in 1985 to eighty-seven enterprises with a par value of TT\$6.5 billion in 1992 (Sargeant and Forde 1991, 8; GORTT 1995, 8).

When the general elections were called for 16 December 1991 (Robinson's birthday)⁷⁰, prediction seemed difficult. The election date was announced on 18 November, one day after the publication in the *Sunday Express* of a SARA poll which had indicated that the NAR was supported by 33 percent of the electorate, the PNM by 24 percent, and the UNC by 12 percent. A new poll one month later, however, saw support change to 34 percent for the PNM, 24 percent for the NAR, and 20 percent for the UNC. After the second poll, Ryan cautiously predicted that the PNM would win sixteen seats, the NAR eleven, and the UNC three to five. He declined to speculate about the fate of four seats (Ryan 1996, 532-4; *LARRCR* 12 December 1991, 7).

The UNC at the time had recently emerged from vicious in-fighting between Basdeo Panday and a group of UNC members led by the party's General Secretary, Kevin Ramnath, Deputy Leader Allan McKenzie, and Party Chairman Rampersad Parasaram. By the time of the UNC party elections on 31 August 1991, however, the three dissidents resigned from the party (Siewah and Moonilal 1991, 471; *LARRCR* 16 May

1991, 3).⁷¹ Furthermore, Panday had on 10 December 1991 filed the first of two writs against the *Trinidad Guardian*, with whom he had had a open feud since he called a boycott of the paper at the UNC's Chaguaramas Convention on 22 July 1990 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 70, 95).

The rejuvenated PNM "government in exile" had presented a slate of new candidates⁷² and a significant policy shift. At its twenty-eighth annual conference on 9 October 1988, Manning's address, "With the PNM there is Hope: A Major Policy Statement," detailed a shift to a pragmatic outward-looking policy encouraging foreign investment, divestment, and a less dominant state, in the context of "a stable social and economic climate" that could be produced only by "a well-structured, highly-organised and well-managed party" (Manning 1988).

The PNM and the NAR fielded a full slate of thirty-six candidates, while the UNC fielded thirty-five.⁷³ The results, with a voter turnout of 65.8 percent (or 54,828 less voters than in 1986), shut the NAR out of Trinidad completely. The PNM won twenty-one seats, the UNC thirteen, and the NAR two in Tobago (see **Error! Reference source not found.** and Table 6-4). The new PNM recaptured most of its 1966 seats, except for the two in Tobago and the Fyzabad seat (in eastern St. Patrick), giving it the

⁷⁰ Robinson announced to the population that he had wanted an NAR victory as his birthday present (*LARRCR* 12 December 1991, 7).

⁷¹ Ryan (1996, 179-208) reproduces a report which he had submitted (in 1990?) to the leadership of the UNC while serving as a one man Commission of Inquiry into the charges made by MP John Humphrey that "a high level of racialism ... [was] being demonstrated in the United National Congress."

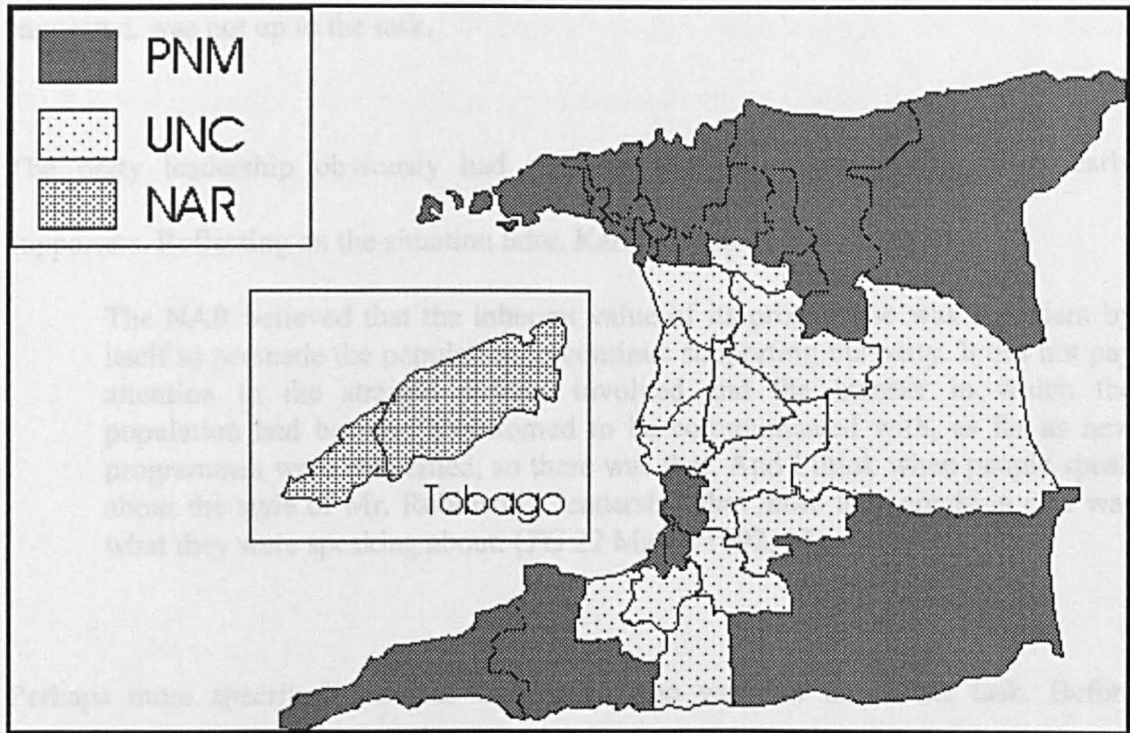
⁷² In October 1991, PNM founder-member Muriel Donawa-McDavidson, MP for Laventille, declared herself an independent, claiming that the new PNM, which she called "Patrick's National Movement," was not the party of "lofty ideals" which she had helped to form (*LARRCR* 7 November 1991, 2). Besides Manning, who had been an MP since 1971, the only previous parliamentarians to contest the elections were former senators and ministers John Eckstein and Wendell Mottley (*LARRCR* 23 January 1992, 5).

smallest parliamentary majority since 1956, when the PNM also won with less than 50 percent of the vote. As in 1981, when the ONR were expected to be the PNM's main challengers, Basdeo Panday surprised the political analysts in the Port of Spain focused press.

The boundary changes in 1991 seem to be significant in the result. The number of seats in central Trinidad had been raised from six (since 1976) to seven, giving the UNC an extra seat in its stronghold region. Conversely, the number of seats in north Trinidad decreased from fifteen (since 1966) to fourteen, making the PNM lose a seat in its traditional base.⁷⁴ The loss of one northern constituency due to boundary changes was compensated by the PNM's securing of Pointe-à-Pierre in south Trinidad, the region from where Patrick Manning originated.

⁷³ As with the WFP in 1966, no UNC candidate contested Tobago West.

⁷⁴ The author counts as north Trinidad seats Diego Martin West, Diego Martin Central, Diego Martin East, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, Port of Spain South, Laventille West, Laventille East/Morvant, St. Ann's East, Barataria/San Juan, St. Joseph, Tunapuna, Arouca North, Arouca South, and Arima. (The author places Toco/Manzanilla in east Trinidad, and St. Augustine in central Trinidad.) The number of constituencies in the area from St. Ann's to Laventille was reduced from six to five. The author counts as central Trinidad seats St. Augustine, Chaguanas, Caroni East, Caroni Central, Couva North, Couva South, and Tabaquite. (The author counts Pointe-à-Pierre in south Trinidad.) Caroni Central was the new seat.

Figure 6-1. Distribution of Constituencies by Party, 1991 General Elections

Created by author from Siewah and Arjoonsingh (1998, vol. 1, 324-9) and GORTT (1991)

Table 6-4. Election Statistics, 1991 General Elections

	Number of seats won	Total Votes	% of Votes
PNM	21	233,950	44.8%
UNC	13	151,046	28.9%
NAR	2	127,335	24.4%
Other	0	7,366	1.4%
Rejects		2,775	0.5%
TOTALS	36	522,472	100.0%

Source: Siewah and Arjoonsingh (1998, vol. 1, 324-9)

On 21 December 1991 ANR Robinson resigned from the leadership of the NAR (*TE* 22 December 1991). The NAR, which had been popularly mandated with such enthusiasm in 1986, was a political failure. Its vision – economic (a private sector-led, outward-oriented strategy) and social (national unity based on a recognition of diversity) – has persisted to the present, but it could not carry out the project itself. The NAR could control neither itself nor the country, losing almost every significant battle it faced after the September 1987 local government elections, whether party indiscipline or social protest. The challenges of the period were exceptionally difficult – economic downturn,

the first non-PNM government in office in thirty years – and the party, as Lloyd Best suggested, was not up to the task.

The party leadership obviously had overestimated the commitment of its early supporters. Reflecting on the situation later, Karl Hudson-Phillips remarked,

The NAR believed that the inherent value of its programme was sufficient by itself to persuade the population to continue supporting the party. It did not pay attention to the straight politics involved and the manner in which the population had become accustomed to be communicated with, as far as new programmes were concerned, so there was that. And I think when people speak about the style of Mr. Robinson's leadership that more than anything else was what they were speaking about. (*TG* 22 March 1992, 12)

Perhaps more specifically it was the leader who was not up to the task. Before becoming political leader of the NAR, Robinson had disparaged Trinidad as a "perishing society" with "calaloo politics" (*TTR* 18/23 December 1986, 2; Ryan 1989a, 58). Indeed, as Best (1991a, 59) pointed out, the Tobagonian ethos was distinct; and perhaps because of its island base and history, it was much more whole than any in Trinidad. George "Umbala" Joseph, radio personality and NAR candidate for Arouca South in 1991, later mused,

I know that power stings the hand that wields it, but Robinson was, to my mind, a most misunderstood person: a man who failed to play mas in a carnival country; who simply failed at being a whore in an open air brothel. That was basically his problem; people expect the masman to "dance de mas," display the costume, not just don the pretty thing and walk across the stage. It must be true what the experts say: "Tobago people do not know how to play Trinidad mas." (Joseph 1993, 259)

It might be interesting to speculate about how Eric Williams would have fared in the 1980s had he been alive: would he have won the 1981 elections? how would he have handled the economic downturn? would the country have disintegrated to such a deplorable level if he had retired and accepted a lesser position like Senior Minister Lee

Kuan Yew in Singapore? After Williams died, neither the PNM nor the NAR could successfully control Trinidad and Tobago’s anarchic politics, which did not go away. Neither administration won a second mandate. Economic recovery in the 1990s would provide another background for Trinidad and Tobago politics after Eric Williams, with the party system achieving a level of stability similar to the 1961-71 period.

PART III

TOWARD A NEW CONFIGURATION? THE UNC, PNM, AND THE NAR AFTER
STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND INDIAN ARRIVAL

CHAPTER 7

“FATHER OF THE NATION”: THE FALL OF THE MANNING ADMINISTRATION, 1992-5

In this chapter, we examine the Manning administration (1992-5) in the context of a newly emerging political, social, and economic context. The turbulent, twenty-year political situation in 1971-91 with its unsettled political entities – found in opposition while Williams was alive, and in government after his death – stabilised in 1991-2000 with the PNM, UNC, and NAR establishing their bases relatively solidly. This emerged alongside a newly liberalised Trinidad and Tobago economy and an accompanying period of unbroken economic growth starting in 1994. This was the outstanding achievement of the Manning administration. At the same time, the celebration in 1995 of the 150th Anniversary of Indian Arrival focused that community socially and politically while the UNC embarked on a serious attempt at building a disciplined and credible national party. Combined with the sometime insupportable blunders of Prime Minister Manning, his administration – like Chambers’s and Robinson’s – could not secure a second term.

Setting the Political Configuration of the 1990s: The PNM, UNC, and NAR

Upon taking office in December 1991, the new, forty-five year old Prime Minister Manning declared that his administration would lead a "crusade against unemployment, poverty, and destitution," while he assured his political opponents, "There will be no vindictiveness, there will be no acrimony" (*LARRCR* 23 January 1992, 5).¹

On 17 January 1992 Finance Minister Wendell Mottley (former Olympic athlete, and Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Affairs in 1985-6), heralded the 1992 budget as "the first bill of the new government in the in the new parliament." The speech made clear that the PNM government was not going to ignore the "imperatives of adjustment," using the title of the 1983 draft plan; that its priority was to see that such adjustment was successful; and that "the task before us ... [would not be] easy and ... [could not] be accomplished in a short time" (Mottley 1992, 1, 21).

The most pressing concern was identified as the rebuilding of foreign exchange reserves. This, however, was closely related to the servicing of public external debt, achieving sustainable economic growth, and effecting a significant and durable reduction in unemployment. Success in exporting activity was to be made a "national priority" with the government committed to supporting exporters with a "full range of technical assistance and extension services for training, product design, market penetration, etc." It was declared that foreign direct investment would be required to supplement domestic saving, and that the economy needed to be liberalised ("fewer

¹ The Manning administration apparently did not ask for directors of state boards and statutory authorities to resign as the NAR did in 1987 (Ryan 1999b 231).

restrictions, barriers and special protectionist devices") in order to make local firms more competitive. Mottley announced that the state would change its role from venture capitalist in energy and energy-related industries, trustee on behalf of the public, and investor of last resort. The PNM government firmly committed itself to a policy of divestment, seeking the "fullest value" for state assets, the "widest possible shareholder participation," and pledged that proceeds would not be used for the settlement of salary arrears accumulated by the previous regime. The government promised to continue the tight fiscal policy but would couple it with a more conservative monetary policy than the previous regime did, stressing the need for "prudent financial management" (Mottley 1992, 6-13).

To support its efforts, the government announced that it would draw US\$40 million from the World Bank and Japan EXIM-BANK² in connection with the Structural Adjustment Loan of 1989 and that it did not plan any major new loans (Mottley 1992, 12). Despite the positive growth in real GDP in 1990-1, Mottley reminded members that the decade of the 1980s had been characterised as the "lost decade" for development and that in that decade Trinidad and Tobago had experienced a decline in real income of more than 30 percent, with an increased incidence of poverty. "So far," he added, "the 1990's do not offer much cause for optimism. There is recession abroad and political turmoil in sensitive areas of the world." Dr. Williams's watchwords "Discipline, Production, Tolerance" were invoked to emphasise the long-term challenge that the country faced (Mottley 1992, 21).

² In 1988, before de-graduation, the government had raised funds for its adjustment programme through a private placement in the Japanese market (Robinson 1988, 11).

In addition to clarifying the PNM's new style of economic management, Manning had made efforts to address ethnicity – particularly the place of Indians in the society – more directly than did his predecessors, not only because of the political breakthroughs Indians had made under the NAR government, but very likely also as a consequence of his origins in south Trinidad.³ In choosing government senators and forming the new cabinet, Manning announced that he wanted to redress the ethnic imbalance found in the PNM team, which included only four Indian PNM members of parliament. Manning also mooted the possibility of an Indo-Trinidadian leading the PNM in the future. However, PNM Party Chairman Lenny Saith had been the only Indian to be made a member of the fourteen-member cabinet (as Minister of Planning) via an appointment to the senate (Ryan 1996, 225; *LARRCR* 23 January 1992, 5).⁴

Outside of government, the Manning administration established at the University of the West Indies the Centre for Ethnic Studies (headed by Drs. John LaGuerre and Selwyn Ryan) which had produced three major studies: *Ethnicity and Employment Practices in the Public and Private Sectors in Trinidad and Tobago* (CES 1993), *A Study of the Secondary School Population in Trinidad and Tobago: Placement Patterns and Practices, A Research Report* (CES 1994), and *Ethnicity and the Media in Trinidad* (Ryan 1995).⁵ At a symbolic level, in March 1992 the prime minister opened an

³ According to the 1990 census San Fernando, the city from which Manning hails, had a population of 7,714 Indians (29.2 percent), as opposed to 4,817 (11.3 percent) in Port of Spain (home of Williams and Chambers), and 962 (2.1 percent) in Tobago (home of Robinson). Moreover, Victoria county, in which San Fernando is located, had an Indian population of 122,918 (62.2 percent) in 1990 (*ASD* 1997).

⁴ Manning's alleged statement that he was "looking for Indians" was regarded by many Indians as patronising. On the other hand, Ryan (1999b, 231-2) suggests that Afro-Trinidadians felt betrayed by Manning, seeing that the Speaker of the House, Occah Seapaul (sister of Minister Ralph Maraj, MP for San Fernando West), and President Noor Hassanali were Indian.

⁵ During this period, the UWI published a number of studies of Trinidad's ethnic groups, including "Cocoa Panyols" (Venezuelans peons), Portuguese (Ferreira 1994), Indians (Ramesar 1994;

international conference on Hindi (held in Trinidad and Tobago for the first time) by announcing, "May this conference be successful and rewarding to you all," in the Hindi language (*TE* 20 April 1992, 5).

However, a review of the first one hundred days of the new government brought criticism from the UNC and the press that the only piece of legislation passed had been the budget (*LRRCR* 14 May 1992, 7).⁶

Meanwhile, the UNC had begun to strengthen its electoral machinery, which it identified as a major weakness contributing to its defeat in the 1991 elections. On 6 June 1992 at an Indo-Caribbean Conference at York University in Toronto, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, human rights lawyer,⁷ UNC MP for Couva South, and opposition Chief Whip in Parliament, had reminded the audience that in 1991 the combined UNC and NAR votes outnumbered those of the PNM, and that only seven thousand votes had prevented the UNC from capturing government (in Ryan 1996, 290). In the constituencies of Pointe-à-Pierre, St. Joseph, Barataria/San Juan, Ortoire/Mayaro, and Tunapuna, if the UNC captured 7,131 votes from the 16,083 NAR voters, or from the 38,637 non-voters – if not from the PNM voters themselves – it would have secured

Ramsaran 1993), Africans (Ryan and Barclay 1992; Ryan and Stewart 1994), and on ethnicity in general (Premdas 1993), often on their relationship to business. A book on the Chinese (Millette 1993) was also published by Inprint, owned by Owen Baptiste.

⁶ According to the author's calculations from the Parliamentary Bill Books, the Manning government presented an average of 40 bills per year between 1992 and 1995, the lowest annual average of any administration, during the shortest parliament in Trinidad and Tobago's political history.

⁷ Controversially, Maharaj was the lawyer for the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen, whose 114 jailed members were freed in July 1992 after high court judge Clebert Brooks declared that Acting President Carter's amnesty was legally binding and that the Muslimeen were "unlawfully detained for twenty-two months." The Muslimeen announced that it would seek damages in the vicinity of US\$12 million, which in turn prompted counter actions from Margaret des Vignes (widow of Leo des Vignes), former NAR ministers Jennifer Johnson and Joseph Toney, and several TTT employees. Businessmen and the Attorney-General Keith Sobion also announced intentions to claim for damages (*LARRCR* 27 August 1992, 2-3).

eighteen seats in 1991 (see Table 7-1). Alternatively, if the UNC and the NAR votes were combined, not only would the PNM have lost these five seats, it also would have lost San Fernando West, in which the PNM polled 6,934 votes, the UNC 2,073 votes, and the NAR 5,087 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 328).

Table 7-1. Five Narrowest Losses of the UNC, 1991 General Elections

CONSTITUENCY	PNM	UNC	NAR	OTHER	REJECTS	% VOTED	MARGIN
Pointe-à-Pierre	5,580	5,388	4,131	245	46	67.4%	192
St. Joseph	5,927	4,615	3,497	185	128	64.5%	1,312
Barataria/San Juan	6,052	4,689	2,626	188	64	62.0%	1,363
Ortoire/Mayaro	7,578	6,013	2,563	0	86	69.5%	1,565
Tunapuna	6,872	4,173	3,266	257	114	65.3%	2,699
TOTALS	32,009	24,878	16,083	875	438	65.8%	7,131

Source: Siewah and Arjoonsingh (1998, vol. 1, 324-9)

In March 1992 the UNC established a Constitution Commission chaired by Maharaj to reform the party's constitution "in order for the necessary Party structures to be put in place to facilitate election victories and to assist the Party in governing the country" (Maharaj 1997, 42-3).

The NAR, on the other hand, continued its process of abridgement. Robinson apparently had been piqued by the party's defeat. After his resignation from leadership of the party on 21 December 1991, Robinson absented himself from the ceremonial opening of parliament on 13 January 1992 and the three-day budget debate starting on 17 January. Pamela Nicholson, NAR MP for Tobago West, also had been absent in the first sittings of the new parliament (*LARRCR* 27 February 1992, 2). Winston Dookeran – who had been defeated in Chaguanas in 1991 by the little-known UNC candidate Hulsie Bhaggan (UNC public relations officer) by a vote of 9,259 to 3,206⁸ (Siewah

⁸ The PNM candidate received 2,837 votes.

and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 325) – refused nomination for party leadership, as did former Minister of Finance, Selby Wilson. Karl Hudson-Phillips allowed himself to be nominated on the condition that he would serve as interim leader for six months, but withdrew his candidacy on the eve of the elections. The post was won, without challenge, by thirty-six year old Dr. Carson Charles, former Minister of Works and former MP for St. Joseph, a minor figure who had only joined the ONR in February 1986, the same month that the party dissolved itself. Charles, however, announced that he would only hold the position for six months and seek re-election at the NAR's Annual Convention in November 1992 (*LARRCR* 14 May 1992, 7; Ryan 1989a, 129).

Local government elections, postponed for one year by the NAR government in September 1990 during the state of emergency, were held on 28 September 1992. The elections attracted a 39.8 percent voter turnout, slightly lower than the 41 percent figure for 1987. They gave the PNM an overall majority (50.3 percent of the vote, in contrast to the 44.8 percent in the 1991 general elections) and resulted in the PNM's control of ten of the fourteen corporations. The UNC's showing was not totally discreditable. On the eve of the elections Panday declared that the results would be a "statement as to whether people believe ... we are in fact an alternative" (*LARRCR* 5 November 1992, 6). The party did not put up candidates for 34 seats, but were able to win just over half of the 105 seats that it did contest. The NAR, on the other hand, contested 118 seats, but were not able to win a single one. They were shut out from Trinidad more resoundingly than they were the year before (see Table 7-2).

Table 7-2. Election Statistics, 1992 Local Government Elections

	Number of candidates	Number of seats won	Total Votes	% of Votes
PNM	139	86	154,818	50.3%
UNC	105	53	113,502	36.9%
NAR	118	0	33,880	11.0%
Independent	9	0	2,522	0.8%
Rejected Ballots			3,072	1.0%
TOTALS	371	139	307,945	100.0%

Source: GORTT ([1993b], 290-4)

Ten weeks later in the THA elections of 7 December 1992, however, the NAR showed its continuing strength in Tobago. The party held on to its eleven seats with 58.2 percent of all ballots cast, and the PNM held its single seat with 36.7 percent. Both parties contested all twelve seats,⁹ and the UNC did not participate at all. The difference in party strength was not the only contrast with the Trinidad elections, as the number of voters increased from 16,720 in 1988 to 17,660 in 1992 (GORTT [1993a]). Tobago had developed its own political dynamic.

The results of these elections confirmed the situation established in 1988 in Tobago (or 1984 if one wanted to describe the DAC victory as a "NAR" one) and in 1991 in Trinidad: the NAR dominating Tobago, with a small PNM opposition; and the PNM and the UNC competing in Trinidad. The persistence of the political entities would characterise the remainder of the decade in a similar way to the 1961-71 PNM-DLP balance that followed the inchoate 1925-61 period.

⁹ Three independents contested the THA elections as well.

Structural Adjustment Under the PNM, 1992-5

Meanwhile the PNM government fulfilled the process of structural adjustment first outlined in 1983 by the Demas Report, but seriously inaugurated by the Robinson administration: trade and financial liberalisation, divestment, increased foreign direct investment, outward orientation, and export diversification.

A World Bank sponsored Trade Reform Programme was embarked on to improve the institutional and legislative structures facilitating trade between Trinidad and Tobago and the outside world (GORTT 1992). In culmination of the programme, in 1992 non-oil manufactured items were removed from the import Negative List, import duties were frozen, and existing duties were to be phased out over a three to five period, significantly moving towards a free and open trading regime. Institutional reform included following the recommendations of a 1986 UNCTAD Report to reduce the number of steps (i.e. document and bureaucratic procedures) needed for the arrival and departure of ships to forty-five from the eighty-one found in the survey. It was proposed that the number of steps to forty-five, reviewed and updated by a local consultant (GORTT 1992, 6-9). To help establish relations between local industries, on the one hand, and overseas markets and investors, on the other, the Industrial Development Corporation, the Tourism Development Authority, and the Export Development Agency were merged in 1994 to create the apparently highly successful Tourism and Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO), mandated to help local businesses create jobs, earn foreign exchange, and attract investment (Renwick 1998, 65). Among Trinidad and Tobago's efforts to increase its international profile, on 17-8 August 1995 the first summit meeting of the Association of Caribbean States was held in Port of Spain, one year after the organisation was set up in Cartagena, Colombia. The summit

inaugurated a new level of co-operation between the Caribbean, Central America, Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela and was attended by six heads of state (including President Fidel Castro) and ten heads of government, together with one vice-president and government ministers from eight other member states. Five associate or observer governments were represented at ministerial or official level, and there were delegations from twenty-one regional and international organisations (*CI* September 1995, 1).

In the financial sphere, on 7 April 1992 the government permitted non-residents to hold foreign exchange accounts in local banks, and "net exporters" were granted unrestricted use of local foreign currency accounts. Although Mottley had declared that currency liberalisation was "not within the immediate plans of this administration" (*LARRCR* 14 May 1992, 7) in 1993 the government did in fact abolish exchange controls on current and capital transactions and floated the Trinidad and Tobago dollar (Forde et al. 1997, 434). On 1 August 1995 money laundering laws came into effect, introducing fines and prison sentences for banks which provided service to persons failing to provide adequate evidence of identity (*CI* September 1995, 10). Impressively, the Trinidad and Tobago dollar was able to maintain its value with only slight depreciation, from TT\$5.35:US\$1.00 in 1993 to TT\$5.95:US\$1.00 in 1995 (see

Table 7-6).¹⁰

In 1995, the government published its *Report on Public Participation in Industrial and Commercial Activities* (GORTT 1995) outlining the PNM's programme of divestment, the most extensive to date.¹¹ Of the eighty-seven companies that comprised government's portfolio as at January 1992, the Investments Division had reviewed sixty-six of those Enterprises and submitted recommendations approved by Cabinet in 1994 (see Table 7-3).

Table 7-3. Divestment Programme as at 31 December 1994

Companies Divested		33
	Completed	15
	Being Completed	6
	In progress	5
	In initial stage	7
Companies Liquidated		23
	Completed	14
	In Progress	9
Companies Restructured/Merged		8
Companies to be retained		2
TOTAL		66

Source: GORTT (1995)

However, according to a Central Bank memorandum, the Manning administration divested twenty-six companies through full and partial privatisation or liquidation. Fourteen of these divestments occurred in 1994 (CBTT 1997).

The government's 1995 report summarised the divestment process for eighteen enterprises as seen in Table 7-4.

¹⁰ Central Bank researchers Forde et al. (1997) provide an excellent account of the changed roles of financial institutions and the legislative reorganisation that enabled the liberalisation process.

¹¹ Note should be taken that the figures on divestment from the various sources (GORTT 1995; Maingot 1998; EIU 1998a; CBTT 1997; *Caribbean Insight*) do not always square.

Table 7-4. Summary of the Divestment Process, 1995

Open International bids	2
Open National bids	3
Stock Exchange	4
Employee Buy-Out	1
Strategic Partner/Stock Exchange	1
Strategic Partner/Open International Bids	1
Strategic Partner/Open Bids	1
Strategic Partner	1
Strategic Alliance	1
Open bids	2
Sold to Lessee	1

Source: GORTT (1995)

Interestingly, the NAR was critical of the PNM's divestment process, arguing that the NAR Government's proposed National Investment Corporation would have allowed for a larger number of shares to be held by Trinidad and Tobago nationals, expanded the local stock market, satisfied debt to public servants, and increased domestic savings and investment (*TG* 2 May 1993, 19).¹² In a television interview on 3 November 1995, Robinson repeated, "This was a historic opportunity that this (PNM) Government had to bring the bulk of the population into the mainstream of economic activity and let the ordinary citizen feel that he had a stake in the country by owing [*sic*] shares in what were then the State enterprises. ... It meant a judicious mix of foreign investment and domestic participation in business. And this historic moment has been lost" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 278).

The UNC expressed concern over the majority sale of BWIA. On 6 January 1995 on behalf of Tobago hotelier Allan Clovin and broadcasting researcher Peta Bain, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj filed a constitutional motion to block the sale. It was alleged that the

United States Acker Group, with whom the government signed a sale agreement that same day, were given privileged information and privileged treatment compared to his clients who were Trinidad and Tobago nationals. The UNC had opposed the bill for the majority sale of BWIA on 20 January 1995 but the sale was finalised on 22 February (CI February 1995; March 1995).

The divestment programme seemed key in the Manning administration's efforts to service government debt, build up foreign exchange, and to finance the adjustment programme. For instance, in the 1995 budget (presented on 25 November 1994) Minister Mottley announced that the proceeds of divesting state enterprises amounted to TT\$544 million, of which TT\$329 million were reserved for net external repayments and TT\$99 million for net internal repayments¹³ (CI January 1995, 10). The *Report on Public Sector Participation* had noted that up to the time of publication in 1995, capital receipts from divestment totalled TT\$1,154.76 million, with the two largest amounts coming from the sale of the Fertiliser Company of Trinidad and Tobago/Trinidad and Tobago Urea Company (FERTRIN/TTUC) (US\$91.47 million) and ISCOTT (US\$70.05 million). Of these receipts, it was reported that US\$58 million was utilised for debt repayment (US\$23.1 million for foreign debt). Importantly, too, the divestment programme was designed to have a minimal impact on overall levels of unemployment. The divestment of FERTRIN/TTUC, Angostura Holdings, Angostura Bitters, Neal and Massey Holdings Ltd., Polymer (Caribbean) Ltd., Trinidad and Tobago Methanol

¹² The PNM and the trade unions strongly opposed the NAR's attempt to introduce the scheme in 1991 (TG 5 August 1999, bus. sec., 1).

¹³ In 1994 the external debt was TT\$10,106 million and the internal debt was TT\$5,572.2 million (QEB December 1998).

Company, and Trinidad Cement, Ltd. was reported not to have resulted in any employment loss (GORTT 1995, 42-3).

Using data provided by the Divestment Secretariat of Trinidad and Tobago dated 10 August 1997, Maingot (1998, 21) has provided different values. These figures show that of twenty companies privatised between 1992 to 1995, TT\$459 million had been received by the government. They also show that 14 percent of the value had been purchased by nationals, and 86 percent by non-nationals (see Table 7-5).

Table 7-5. Divestments, 1992-8

LOCAL DIVESTMENTS		Date Divested	Value (TT\$m)	
Farrell House (1975) Limited (100%)		Nov-92	4.8	
Trinidad and Tobago Printing and Packaging (100%)		Nov-93	11.6	
National Fruit Processors (100%)		Apr-93	0.2	
Angostura Bitters (88.0% preference shares)		Dec-93	0.4	
Angostura Holdings (0.02% ordinary shares)		Dec-93	0.1	
Neal and Massey Holdings (3.12% ordinary shares)		Dec-93	5.0	
National Poultry (18% GOTT)		Jul-94	0.1	
Polymer (Caribbean) Ltd. (25.5% preference shares)		Jul-94	0.3	
Shipping Company of Trinidad and Tobago (100%)		Dec-94	5.5	
Allied Innkeepers (Holiday Inn)		Jun-95	2.6	
National Flour Mills (20%)		May-95	23.6	
Reinsurance Company of Trinidad and Tobago Ltd. (TRINRE)		Dec-95	10.0	
TOTAL VALUE OF LOCAL DIVESTMENTS			64.2	
FOREIGN DIVESTMENTS		Date Divested	Value (TT\$m)	Principal Investor
Fertrin/TTUC (100%) ¹⁴		Mar-93	132.1	Arcadian
Trinidad and Tobago Methanol (TTMC) (31%)		Jan-94	47	Ferrostaal/Helm
Arawak Cement (49%)		Mar-94	2.8	Domestic
Trinidad Cement Limited (TCL) (20%)		Aug-94	10.8	CEMEX
Petrotrin O2C2/UFC Plant		Aug-94	4.4	Domestic
Power Generation Company of TT (49%)		Dec-94	107.5	SEI/Amoco
Iron and Steel Company of TT (100%)		Dec-94	70.1	ISPAT
BWIA (51.0%)		Jan-95	20.1	Acker Group
TOTAL VALUE OF FOREIGN DIVESTMENTS			394.8	

Source: Maingot (1998, 21)

Following the NAR's introduction of Cable and Wireless in the local telecommunications service in 1989, in May 1995 the British water company, Severn Trent, had been selected as the international partner for the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) (*CI* June 1995, 11). On 23 December 1994 the Power Generation Company of Trinidad and Tobago was established as a joint venture company out of the

¹⁴ The *Economist Intelligence Unit* (1998a, 26) has given yet another figure, US\$175 million, as the amount raised from the sale of FERTRIN and TTUC to Arcadian in March 1993.

partial divestment of the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Company to the Amoco Business Development Company and Southern Electrical International. The government retained majority shareholding (GORTT 1998, 40).

Divestment and rationalisation stimulated investment, largely from outside the country. During its term of office the NAR government had attempted to renew the declining oil industry, in terms of exploration activity and refining. On 26 June 1991, the NAR had signed a fifteen-year US\$260 million agreement with the IDB for the modernisation of the Trinidad and Tobago Oil Company's (TRINTOC) Pointe-à-Pierre refinery (taken over from Texaco in 1985), and for land and marine crude recovery. When the PNM came to power in December that year, however, the IDB stopped the loan. But in July 1992 it was reinstated because the IDB considered the PNM's rationalisation approach to be superior to that adopted by the previous government (EIU 1998a, 28). In particular, the Trinidad and Tobago government created a new oil company, the Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago (PETROTRIN) in 1993, incorporating the Trinidad and Tobago Petroleum Company (TRINTOPEC) and TRINTOC, creating the largest of the four state-owned oil and gas companies operating in Trinidad and Tobago (Maingot 1998, 22). The formation of PETROTRIN was a condition for another US\$410 million loan for upgrading the country's refineries and the recovery of heavy oil. In May 1993 the first phase of the refinery upgrade project was completed, as part of a plan to increase the full refining capacity of the Pointe-à-Pierre plant from the existing 100,000 barrels per day to 160,000 by the end of the 1995 (EIU 1998a, 28). In addition to refining, crude oil production picked up briefly in 1994 and 1995 (see

Table 7-6). In October and November 1995 PETROTRIN received favourable assessments from *Petrovision* and the *Petroleum Economist* (Maingot 1998, 24).

Meanwhile, foreign investment in the natural gas sector had also been picking up. In January 1992 Amoco (Trinidad and Tobago's most significant foreign investor, beginning operation in the country in 1961) announced that it would invest US\$300 million over ten years to expand the production and marketing of natural gas to further increase its non-oil investments in Trinidad.¹⁵ On 9 September 1993 British Gas and Texaco (who had left Trinidad and Tobago in 1984) agreed to jointly invest US\$300 million over twenty years for natural gas production. According the *Economist Intelligence Unit* (1998a, 29), both these investments resulted from the PNM's policy shift after the apparently costly failure of the NAR government's Trinidad and Tobago Marine Petroleum Company (TRINTOMAR). TRINTOMAR, which began production in 1990, was the government's first effort to extract in deep water off the east coast, in an attempt to ensure that the country was not dependent on a foreign gas supplier, namely Amoco Trinidad. Production levels were well below expectations, however, reportedly due to faulty reserve estimates.¹⁶

Significant natural gas finds had occurred during the period. In 1992 there were 8.4 trillion cubic feet of proven natural gas marine reserves, 4.9 trillion probable and 0.6 trillion possible. In 1995, the figures were 12.3 trillion proven, 3.7 trillion probable, and 1.9 trillion possible (GORTT 1997e). Between May 1994 and April 1995 Amoco

¹⁵ Before the sale in 1993, Amoco had owned 49 percent of FERTRIN, which started production in 1981 (EIU 1998a, 29; GORTT 1990b, 21).

¹⁶ This was the among the first attempts at hydrocarbon exploration in Trinidad and Tobago's deep waters.

Trinidad Oil Co. alone had made new natural gas finds of 3.5 trillion cubic feet (*CI* May 1995, 10).

In 1992, Cabot LNG Corporation, the largest and oldest liquefied natural gas (LNG) importer in North America, approached the state-owned National Gas Company (NGC) to discuss the possibility of buying gas from Trinidad and Tobago. It was the fourth time that such an idea had been mooted since the first significant discoveries of natural gas in 1968, but this was the first time that a buyer initiated discussions. In February 1993, Amoco, British Gas, Cabot, and the NGC began evaluating the feasibility of building an LNG plant in Point Fortin in St. Patrick, the original, declining oil-producing area.¹⁷ The study indicated that the project should be about one-third bigger than originally envisaged and would require an investment of US\$1 billion. Cabot committed itself to purchasing 60 percent of the plant's output and Enagas of Spain was brought in to purchase the other 40 percent. In July 1995 an initial shareholding structure was announced, but was later revised to include Repsol (Enagas's parent company). The final equity structure was Amoco Trinidad (LNG) BV (34 percent), British Gas Trinidad LNG Limited (26 percent), Repsol LNG Port of Spain BV (20 percent), Cabot Trinidad LNG Limited (10 percent) and NGC Trinidad and Tobago LNG Limited (10 percent) (*The Atlantic Story* [1999], 1; GORTT 1998, 2; *CI* August 1995, 11).

Investment in the petrochemical sector – nitrogenous fertilisers, methanol, and ammonia – also began to accelerate. In addition to the March 1993 sale of FERTRIN

(51 percent government-owned) and TTUC (100 percent government owned) to Arcadian, the Caribbean Methanol Company – a joint venture between the emerging Trinidadian conglomerate, Caribbean Life (CL) Financial¹⁸ (64.9 percent), Ferrostaal of Germany (25.1 percent), and Methanex Corp. of the US (10 percent) – began in 1991 construction of the country's second methanol plant, which came on stream in November 1993. The 500,000 tonnes per year plant was located next to the state-owned Trinidad and Tobago Methanol Company (TTMC) plant at Point Lisas and cost US\$200 million. In 1994 Ferrostaal and its partner Helm bought a 31 percent share in the TTMC for US\$47 million, and signed an agreement with the government to construct a third methanol plant at a cost of US\$235 million. Also in 1994, a letter of intent was signed by Ferrostaal, Helm, the NGC, the TTMC and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to develop a fourth methanol plant, involving an investment of US\$250 million, initially planned for La Brea, but later moved to Point Lisas (EIU 1998a, 29-30; *CI* May 1995, 11; GORTT 1998, 31). In June 1995, the Mitsui company of Japan bought a 25.1 percent stake in TTMC from the government for an undisclosed price, leaving the government a 43.9 percent share in the company (*CI* July 1995, 10). In December 1994 plans were announced by Farmland Industries of Kansas City (owned by a US farmers' organisation) and the Mississippi Chemical Corporation to build also in La Brea the world's largest ammonia plant at 600,000 tonnes per annum, estimated to cost US\$1.8 billion (*CI* January 1995, 10; GORTT 1998, 32).

¹⁷ In 1990 St. Patrick had a population of 112,492 (10 percent of Trinidad and Tobago) as compared to 117,189 (12.6 percent) in 1970 (*ASD* 1983; 1997). The *National Physical Development Plan* (GORTT 1982a) described it as a transitional zone of declining development.

¹⁸ The emergence of CL Financial was part of the change from the "big four" conglomerates of the 1970s: Neal and Massey, McEneaney-Alstons, Geddes Grant, and Kirpilani's. Kirpilani's declared bankruptcy in 1986, Neal and Massey purchased Geddes Grant in 1992, and Middle Eastern-born businessman Anthony Sabga purchased McEneaney-Alstons, renaming it Ansa-McAl (*TE* 17 September 1995, 5; Kiely 1996, 158).

There had not only been expansion in petrochemicals but in steel as well. In January 1993 the Nucor Corporation of the US announced that it had chosen Trinidad and Tobago as the site for its first overseas operation, building a US\$60 million iron-carbide production plant, with a capacity of 320,000 tonnes per year, processing cheap iron ore from Brazil with Trinidad's cheap natural gas, to be used in Nucor's flat-rolled sheet mills in the US. Also in the sector, on 3 November 1994 Caribbean Ispat Limited announced its plans to purchase its facility, which it had been managing since 1989, and to sell 40 percent of the share capital to nationals of Trinidad and Tobago (EIU 1998a, 27).

These major investments, in addition to the Investment Sector Reform Programme embarked upon by the government with assistance from the World Bank, contributed to the great increase in foreign direct investment, which totalled US\$1,360.3 million between 1992 and 1995, almost three times the 1987-91 total of US\$498.5 million during the NAR administration.

The positive growth in 1990-1, which was reversed in 1992-3, resumed in 1994. This recovery would be sustained until the end of the decade, accompanied by, and achieved through, some significant changes in economic structure (see Table 7-6).

Table 7-6. Selected Economic Indicators, 1992-5

	1992	1993	1994	1995
GDP growth at constant 1985 prices	-1.1%	-2.6%	5.0%	3.2%
Crude Oil Prices (US\$/barrel)	\$20.57	\$18.45	\$17.19	\$18.44
Crude Oil Production (millions of barrels per day)	135.8	123.9	131.0	130.7
Total Revenue (TT\$ million)	\$6,233. 5	\$6,743. 5	\$7,564. 7	\$8,511. 8
Current Oil Revenue (% of Total Revenue)	29.2%	26.7%	25.1%	29.8%
Total Expenditure (TT\$ million)	\$6,877. 4	\$6,783. 3	\$7,571	\$8,458. 5
Total Expenditure (as % of GDP at current prices)	29.7%	27.7%	25.8%	26.7%
Capital Expenditure (as % of Total Expenditure)	6.3%	4.4%	6.2%	7.4%
Gross Capital Formation (as % of Real GDP)	8.6%	9.0%	12.5%	10.5%
(Exports + Imports)/GDP at current prices	76.1%	82.6%	78.7%	93.0%
Overall Surplus/Deficit (TT\$ million)	-\$644.0	-\$39.8	-\$6.3	\$53.3
Overall Surplus/Deficit (as % of GDP at current prices)	-2.8%	-0.2%	0.0%	0.2%
Foreign Direct Investment (US\$ million)	\$171.0	\$372.6	\$521.0	\$295.7
Exports excluding all mineral fuels (as % of all exports, excluding mineral fuels under processing agreement)	39.6%	42.4%	51.9%	52.2%
Overall Surplus/Deficit on the Balance of Payments (US\$ million)	-\$116.8	\$151.3	\$181.0	\$32.5
Net Official Foreign Reserves (US\$ million)	-\$83.3	\$75.4	\$261.9	\$296.1
Exchange rate, annual average (TT\$:US\$)	\$4.25	\$5.35	\$5.92	\$5.95
Total Debt to GDP Ratio	50.1%	60.4%	53.5%	51.1%
Unemployment Rate	19.6%	19.8%	18.4%	17.2%
Rate of Inflation	6.5%	10.1%	8.8%	5.3%

Sources: QEB (December 1997), GORTT (1997c), EIU (1998a, 42), CBTT (1993), AES (1994; 1998)

In 1994 real GDP growth reached 5 percent, the highest rate since 1980, when real GDP growth of 10.4 percent resulted from the oil shock of 1979-80.¹⁹ Growth in 1994, significantly, was underpinned by oil revenues that amounted to only 25.1 percent of total revenue, as compared to the last peak of 62.1 percent in 1981 or to 40 percent in

¹⁹ GDP at constant 1970 prices peaked in 1982 at TT\$2,983.4 million. In 1989, at the end of the seven-year recession, GDP at constant 1970 prices was TT\$2,127 million, between the level of 1976 (TT\$2,001.8 million) and 1977 (TT\$2,184.4). In 1994, the author has calculated that GDP at constant 1970 prices was between TT\$2,225.5 million and TT\$2,234.8 million, a level between that of 1977 and 1978 (TT\$2,403.2) (CBTT 1993).

1991, the last year real GDP growth occurred. Total government expenditure, too, was 25.8 percent of GDP at current market prices in 1994, as compared to the last peak of 47.4 percent in 1982. The government was also able to eliminate its fiscal deficit and emerge in surplus in 1995. Importantly, in 1993 the country recorded a surplus in its external balance of payments, the first since 1981. In the current situation, foreign direct investment played a much larger role in the economy, hitting a high of US\$521 million in 1994. (The previous high was US\$202.8 million in 1975.) The degree of openness, measured as export and imports divided by GDP, reached a sixteen-year high of 93 percent in 1995. Significantly, the value of non-fuel exports exceeded the value of fuel exports in 1994. Foreign reserves, too, had been built up rapidly, multiplying three-and-a-half times in 1993-4.

However, the significantly lower level of investment in the 1980s and 1990s might also be considered part of the structural change as well. Investment, measured as gross capital formation, hit a high of 12.5 percent of real GDP in 1994, but was still lower than anything before 1986 when the ratio was 17 percent. (In 1980 the rate of gross capital formation reached a high of 64.6 percent of real GDP.) There was also very little capital expenditure by government, reaching a low in 1993 of 4.4 percent of GDP at current market prices, from a high of 47.7 percent in 1981.

Unemployment – a persistent problem – had been brought down to 17.2 percent in 1995, the same rate as in 1986. This was still a higher figure than any before 1986, however. In addition, growth was accompanied by an unpredictable rate of inflation, and the debt to GDP ratio still remained fairly high (see Table 7-6; CBTT 1993).

The 1994 By-Elections: Political Openings in Trinidad

In 1994, quite unusually, five by-elections had occurred. In 1993, UNC Councillor for Curepe Ivan Roopia had died and a by-election was called for 24 May 1994. A by-election for PNM-controlled Petit Valley/Cocorite had also been scheduled for the same day. On 13 March 1994, PNM MP for Laventille West and Minister of Public Utilities Morris Marshall had died, and the by-election for his seat was scheduled again on the same day. Following this, Cyril Rajaram, PNM MP for Pointe-à-Pierre had also died. The by-election for that seat was scheduled for 30 May 1994 (Siewah 1994, 460). On 22 May, two days before the elections, UNC MP for Caroni East Shamshuddin Mohammed (former PNM minister from 1971-81, one of the "millstones" about which Eric Williams complained in 1976, and younger brother of Kamaluddin Mohammed) also died (Siewah 1994, 460).

The Laventille West, Petit Valley/Cocorite, and Curepe seats were returned to their respective parties. Interestingly, a record ten candidates vied for the Laventille West seat, including a short-lived party organised by the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen (Siewah 1994, 460-1; see Table 7-7). However, the Pointe-à-Pierre seat in the House of Representatives, which the PNM won by only 192 votes in 1991, switched hands to the UNC (symbolically on the 149th anniversary of Indian Arrival in Trinidad), giving the opposition an unprecedented fourteen seats.

Table 7-7. Bye-Election Statistics, 1994

Seat	Date	PNM	UNC	NAR
Laventille West <i>(House of Representatives)</i>	24 May 1994	3,878	348	365
	16 December 1991	10,947	211	2,034
Petit Valley/Cocorite <i>(Diego Martin Corporation)</i>	24 May 1994	826	162	353
	28 September 1992	1,507	—	664
Curepe <i>(Tunapuna/Piarco Corporation)</i>	24 May 1994	638	1,573	102
	28 September 1992	704	1,657	—
Pointe-à-Pierre <i>(House of Representatives)</i>	30 May 1994	4,205	7,318	868
	16 December 1991	5,580	5,388	4,131

Sources: Siewah (1994, 461); Siewah and Arjoonsingh (1998, vol. 1, 325-7), GORTT ([1993b], 291-2)

The Caroni East by-election was later scheduled for 22 August 1994. The NAR and the UNC attempted to forge a coalition and appeared together on a Joint UNC-NAR Unity Platform at St. Helena Junction on 29 July 1994. The alliance was extended to include the small, new NDP party. The coalition did not last as the NAR objected to the UNC's connections to the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen. Exacerbating the situation, Jamaat member Omowale Muhammed had sent a note to Panday while on the unity platform. The UNC eventually recaptured the seat by itself (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 134, 145, 259).

Meanwhile, the NAR continued its Trinidadian demise. In the 1994 by-elections it continued to draw lower shares of votes, while at the leadership level more people were leaving. In November 1992 Horace Broomes, public relations officer, quit; on 27 May 1993 political leader Carson Charles quit, replaced by Selby Wilson; and on 23 October 1994 the entire executive resigned.

The Consolidation of the UNC, 1992-5

Unlike the ULF, which had lost electoral support from 1976 to 1981, the UNC were growing stronger. In October 1993 the UNC's constitution commission presented the draft of the new constitution to the National Executive of the Party, the Parliamentary Caucus of the Party, and then to conferences of activists of the Party. At one of these conventions, Panday reiterated that "the UNC had more votes than was necessary in order to win those [marginal] constituencies. Had we been able to bring out those votes on election day the UNC would have had 18 seats, the PNM 16 and NAR 2 seats. And had the NAR not divided our votes in 1991, we would have won 19 seats" (in Ryan 1996, 216). In an interview with *Newsday*²⁰ on 26 March 1995 Panday confidently maintained that the majority of NAR supporters would switch to the UNC once they realised that the NAR had "no life in it" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 174).

Populist appeals were made to Indians (by referring to the recently published 1990 Census data showing that they constituted 40.3 percent of the population of Trinidad and Tobago, as compared to Africans who made up 39.6 percent) as well as to the "masses in the East/West Corridor" (who, Panday argued, were "coming around to the view that they are not the PNM, but the beasts of burden of the PNM, whose backs are ridden election after election by a small French Creole clique supported by a black managerial elite"), while aggressively stating that "the party is not content to be in a position of opposition. We are preparing to take the government, and if we are really to mobilise our forces, we need to strengthen our structure" (Ryan 1996, 216, 219, 223).

²⁰ A popular daily newspaper started in 1995.

The UNC seriously attempted to present itself as an alternative government, similar to Manning's "government in exile" strategy in 1987-91, preparing itself to capitalise on the new government's perhaps inevitable mistakes (Maharaj 1997, 43). Internationally, the UNC had gained recognition through its participation in the Commonwealth delegation that monitored South Africa's first all-race elections held on 26-9 April 1994 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 55). At home, the UNC required that its MPs of both Houses attend weekly Caucus meetings where policy and strategy for debates were discussed and adopted. It was recognised that "appropriate disciplinary action against members who broke Party lines was necessary to remove or reduce the perception held by a section of the electorate that the Party did not have the strength to impose discipline on its Parliamentarians" (Maharaj 1997, 43), no doubt to prevent damage to the party as had occurred during Panday's fights with Ramnath in 1991, Robinson in 1986-7, and Shah in 1977-8.

A test came with MP for Chaguanas Hulsie Bhaggan, who became prominent and controversial in 1993 by her deeply taboo-ridden public allegations that a spate of rapes in central Trinidad were carried out against Indian women by African men. In June 1994 Bhaggan supported the PNM Government's bill to amend the Corporal Punishment Act, which the UNC had opposed. Bhaggan was subsequently sidelined by the UNC Parliamentary Caucus for flouting the party line. She became openly critical of the UNC leadership, charging that there was a "dictatorship" in the party, and that "the personal views of a few formed the basis of the party line." Bhaggan echoed Nizam Mohammed in 1987 and Roy Joseph in 1946, with her statement, "Trinidad and Tobago has come of age and MPs can't be restricted by party line any more like in the '60s and '70s. The population is educated more than ever before and the populace is now forced to think and form its own opinions. It is therefore the job of the MP to seek

out what these views are and bring them to Parliament."²¹ Bhaggan argued for a "more democratic and meaningful approach" to running the party, and claimed that she had no intention of leaving the UNC voluntarily (*TG* 10 July 1994, 10). Bhaggan, who seemed to gain much sympathy from (the Creole-oriented) women's organisations and the daily press (she was subsequently given her own newspaper column in the *Trinidad Guardian*), formed the "Monday Club" within the UNC after she was banned from representing the party, and on 11 December 1994 founded her own political party, the Movement for Unity and Progress (MUP) (*CI* January 1995, 10-1).

The UNC faced an additional challenge at the end of 1994. After a party meeting at the Rienzi Complex on 16 November 1994, less than a month before the MUP was formed, Panday marched with his supporters to the Couva police station and gave himself up to the police, where he was arrested on five indictable offences: three indecent assault and two rape charges. He was released on TT\$75,000 bail. Five days earlier, on 11 November, the weekly tabloid *Trinidad and Tobago Mirror*,²² under the front page headline "Move to Nail Panday in Court!" reported that a private fund was set up to retain the services of senior counsel Theodore Guerra (former NAR MP for Port of Spain South) to prosecute Panday. At the Rienzi complex before his arrest Panday defiantly declared, "They believed that I would lie down and die on the ground with my feet in the air. Old politicians never die, they become more sexy." He warned that the UNC would be subjected to "the worst kind of propaganda, vilification and attack. This (impending arrest) is only the beginning. When the time comes for election, the people

²¹ One is reminded of Dr. Williams's lament, "Exactly what the PNM laughed at unmercifully and condemned at its birth in 1956, to the plaudits of the population, the same population is now demanding and advocating" (Williams 1973a, 20).

²² Edited by Raffique Shah

will decide if they still want me. And if they don't, I will accept their decision with equanimity. In the meantime, I am standing here waiting to be arrested. I hope Manning does not disappoint me." Speaking the next day in Tunapuna, Panday linked the charges to collusion among the "parasitic oligarchy" (defined as the "small white clique buttressed by a black managerial elite" who monopolise the media, the banks, and the "lucrative aspects of the import export trade"), the PNM, the "drug mafia," and the Bhaggan's Monday Club (which would soon become the MUP), and stated that his arrest would instead give him the opportunity to expose the collaborators. Panday claimed that the SARA poll of December 1993 and the Oxford Analytica poll of June 1994, which both put the UNC ahead of the PNM, frightened the "clique" into taking desperate measures. With great ribald humour, he lambasted the sexual assault charges in its details, and in conclusion warned his supporters to "be prepared for a snap election" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 151-68).

On 13 December 1994 two out of three charges of indecent assault were dismissed as "substantially defective" by the Couva district court. Hearing was adjourned on the other indecent assault charge and two rape charges. On 24 January 1995 Panday was re-arrested on two revised charges of indecent assault and was released on bail of TT\$30,000. On 10 March 1995, two charges of indecent assault were dismissed for the second time, and their re-laying after being dismissed in December was ruled an abuse of process on the part of the Director of Public Prosecutions. In April 1995 Panday accordingly filed a suit against the state for damages for malicious prosecution (*CI* January 1995; March 1995; April 1995; May 1995).²³

²³ On 16 November 1995, one week after Panday had been sworn in as prime minister, senior magistrate Anthony Mohipp dismissed the remaining three charges. Mohipp declared that there were

In February 1995 the UNC had adopted its new constitution and in August 1995 Bhaggan was formally expelled from the party (Maharaj 1997, 43; *CI* August 1995, 4). The UNC petitioned to have Bhaggan's Chaguanas seat declared vacant, but Deputy Speaker Rupert Griffith (MP for Arima) rejected it, since the standing orders of the House did not provide for the recognition of parties or their leaders.²⁴ The UNC had its seats reduced to thirteen once again. There were other, lesser defections from the UNC in 1995. Senator Mumtaz Hosein resigned September 1995 saying that he had lost confidence in the party leadership. Also, three UNC councillors – Mahendra Ramlogan, Charles Persad, and Sheila Boodoosingh – resigned from the UNC to join the PNM (*CI* October 1995, 11; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 116). These defections, however, did not seem to harm the party. In particular, the charges against Panday seemed to boost his support by giving the party opportunity to organise a series of public meetings (Ryan 1996, 291; Maharaj 1997, 44).

"Father of the Nation" and Indian Arrival: Toward the Snap Elections of 1995

As the UNC were building up its machinery the Manning administration was making serious political errors. In January 1994 Minister of Industry and Commerce Senator Brian Kuei Tung had resigned, and the Prime Minister expressed his displeasure at the press's critical coverage of the incident (*CI* December 1995, 4; Siewah and Arjoonsingh

"grave discrepancies in the evidence, which appeared to have been fabricated"; there had been an abuse of process; one witness had "clearly committed perjury"; and the prosecution evidence "in its totality" was "manifestly unreliable" (*CI* December 1995, 11; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 340-2, app. 42-6).

²⁴ Subsequently, Attorney-General Sobion discussed with the UNC amending the standing orders to comply with the Crossing of the Floor Act, introduced in 1978 (*CI* October 1995, 11; Ghany 1996, 346-8).

1998, vol. 1, 98). While a relatively isolated event at the time, it would feed more than one year later into a series of events which severely lowered Manning's esteem among much of the population. In April 1995 Manning had dismissed (by fax, reportedly) Alexander Lau, honorary consul in Hong Kong, apparently because of the consul's absence from the colony during a visit by the prime minister and permanent secretary Knowlston Gift. Lau protested that he had notified in March the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ralph Maraj (MP for San Fernando West), of his absence, a fact which Maraj had confirmed. On 5 May, Lau threatened to sue the prime minister for wrongful dismissal and defamation, but withdrew the threat after a meeting with Manning. On 7 May 1995 forty-nine year old Prime Minister Manning delivered a television broadcast in which he declared that he was the "Father of the Nation" and must therefore speak "in a certain way." In the broadcast, he announced that Minister Maraj had been relieved of his duties, three months before the ACS conference in Port of Spain. Maraj, who was moved to the Prime Minister's office as minister without portfolio, was replaced by Gift, who had "hastily" joined the PNM and replaced Jean Elder in the Senate. No reason was given for the demotion of Maraj (formerly a prominent dramatist), who told a press conference the next day that he had not been informed about the change until he saw the television broadcast and that his new responsibilities were unclear. He announced that he was going on leave, adding that he would not be "humiliated, degraded or emasculated." Several cabinet ministers expressed concern about the events. Further controversy was added when on 17 May Gift had resigned because of questions asked in the press about the sale of vehicles in 1987 at the end of Gift's three-year term as High Commissioner of Jamaica. On 19 May, a cabinet reshuffle was announced, with the Minister of Information and Public Administration Senator Gordon Draper appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, in addition to his existing

portfolios; Maraj appointed Minister of Public Utilities, a portfolio previously held by Energy Minister Barry Barnes; and other changes in the Ministries of Health, National Security, and Social Development. Maraj gained public and collegial sympathy, while the UNC and the *Express* criticised Manning's actions as essentially erratic, unstable and lacking good judgement (*CI* June 1995, 1, 12; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 172).

On 14 June 1995 Panday had presented a motion of no confidence against the government and was jeered and heckled by a crowd of three thousand PNM supporters, including a number of government ministers, as he entered the parliament building. He was also booed by PNM members when he entered the chamber. The motion was lost by nineteen votes to thirteen. The two NAR members left the chamber before the vote was taken; Pamela Nicholson said she "did not want to miss a basketball game" (*CI* July 1995, 2).

Meanwhile, the Government and the Speaker of the House, Occah Seapaul (sister of Ralph Maraj), were crossing swords. The government had earlier tried to persuade Seapaul to resign, following her involvement in a court case in June 1995 connecting her to fraudulent conversion of Trinidad and Tobago funds through a TT\$200,000 bank loan. Seapaul refused, prompting Attorney-General Keith Sobion to present a motion of no confidence in the Speaker. Seapaul, however, ruled that the motion was unconstitutional. In July 1995 government and independent senators, opposed by those of the UNC, passed a bill to amend the constitution to permit the House of Representatives to remove its Speaker by a majority vote (*CI* August 1995, 11). On 24 July, the date the bill was to be presented in the Lower House, Seapaul adjourned the sitting, preventing it from being debated. As Seapaul left Parliament, leader of

government business, Trade and Industry minister Ken Valley shouted at Seapaul, "You can run, but you can't hide." On 28 July Valley was suspended by the Speaker for six months, despite his apology. He later won a High Court order reinstating him to the House pending hearing of a constitutional motion filed by his lawyers. On 3 August Acting President Emmanuel Carter declared a state of emergency in Port of Spain and Seapaul was placed under house arrest. On 4 August the House approved the constitutional amendment. That day the prime minister explained the government's actions by alleging that the Speaker had been involved in a "diabolical conspiracy" to deprive the government of its parliamentary majority by "improperly suspending government members." Manning further alleged that Seapaul had planned to suspend on that very day Attorney-General Keith Sobion and Education Minister Augustus Ramrekersingh. He suggested that Seapaul had acted in collusion with the opposition in an attempt to suspend the proceedings of the House indefinitely. The government, Manning argued, "had to act to save the country from the massive instability and social disruption which most certainly would have followed if the schemers had been allowed to carry out their plan of overthrowing the government inside the parliament." That day, Ralph Maraj resigned from the government, giving the opposition seventeen out of thirty-six seats (thirteen for the UNC, two for the NAR, one for the MUP, and Maraj as an independent). Maraj subsequently appeared on UNC platforms,²⁵ called the general council of the PNM "a lynch mob," and described Manning as a "third-rate tyrant" and a "petty, insecure dictator." On 5 August Seapaul agreed to hand over her duties to her

²⁵ While Public Utilities Minister, Maraj delivered the feature address at the 150th Anniversary Celebrations of Indian Arrival in Trinidad and Tobago, stating, "I would be failing in my duty if I did not recognise the contribution that Panday has made in the country. Indeed he would go down in history as one who has struggled for the liberation, enlightenment and development of all the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago." He was chastised by the 27 May *Express* editorial entitled, "Now Really, Mr. Maraj" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 172).

deputy, Rupert Griffith (MP for Arima), pending determination in court of a constitutional motion against the government. The state of emergency was lifted on 7 August and Seapaul was released from arrest.²⁶ The UNC subsequently announced its intention to start impeachment proceedings against Acting President Carter. In September, Ralph Maraj resigned from both parliament and the PNM and later became a UNC member. (*CI* September 1995, 4; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 180; Ghany 1997b, 135-6). Although a serious situation, there had been a feeling that the declaration of a State of Emergency was excessive and Manning's allegation of a "palace coup" engineered by the Speaker and the Opposition was unnecessarily exaggerated. By the end of the affair, the PNM was reduced to eighteen effective members in the thirty-six member parliament, a by-election was to be held by December 1995 for Maraj's San Fernando West seat, and local government elections were due on 27 December 1995 at the latest (*CI* January 1996, 10).

At the same time as the PNM's troubles with Ralph Maraj and his sister Occah Seapaul were occurring, the country was gearing up for the celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Indian Arrival, inadvertently giving the PNM controversies a perhaps disproportionate and undeserved racial dimension. The Indian community had been given a strong boost with the establishment in 1993 of FM 103, a twenty-four hour

²⁶ On 3 August, Seapaul filed an action claiming defamation of character against Attorney-General Sobion for statements made by him at two press conferences on 3 and 5 July; on 5 August, she filed a constitutional motion challenging the validity of the Constitution Amendment Act that created the procedure for the removal of the Speaker which was given Presidential assent on that day; and on 21 August she filed another constitutional motion challenging the validity of the proclamation of the State of Emergency and the Detention Order and claimed damages for unlawful arrest between 4 and 7 August. The action against the Attorney-General was settled out of court in November 1995 after the general elections. It seems that the other matters have not been substantively heard in the High Court at the time of research (Ghany 1997b, 135-7; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 180).

Indian-oriented radio station.²⁷ FM 103 had been started by Dik Henderson (a non-Indian) and Marcel Mahabir against the belief that "an Indian radio station ... [would] never survive." Immediately, in its first year FM 103 became the number one radio station in the country. The impact on local Indian culture was tremendous, bringing Indian culture into the mainstream of everyday life; increasing the total radio audience by 200,000; and boosting the popularity of Indian films, local Indian music, and local Indian culture for a new generation of young people; and reviving it among the old. In 1995 one other Indian radio station was created, and the radio station at the government-owned International Communications Network (ICN) had converted its programming to an all-Indian format. By 1998 there were four stations dedicated to full-time Indian programming (*TE* 12 July 1998, supp., 1: *Media Trak* October 1993; March 1994; April 1998).

In September 1994 the "hijab issue" would highlight the place in Trinidad and Tobago of Muslims, 93 percent of whom were Indian according to 1990 census data (Ryan 1996, 470; *ASD* 1997). Sumayyah Mohammed, a student at Holy Name Convent in Port of Spain, had been told that she would have to leave the school if she continued to wear her hijab (the Muslim covering for a woman's head and breasts). A similar incident had occurred in 1976 at St. George's College in Barataria; and in September 1992, a Muslim girl was refused entry to the sixth form at St. Joseph's Convent and was transferred to the all-boys Presentation College in Chaguanas. In the 1994 incident former PNM Deputy Leader Kamaluddin Mohammed and former President of the Senate/Acting President Dr. Wahid Ali intervened. After dialogue with denominational

²⁷ The liberalisation of radio and television had been started under the NAR administration, who granted twenty-six radio and three television licensees, but the stations did not start operating until the

boards proved unsuccessful, the case was taken to the High Court where the judgement favoured Sumayyah Mohammed (Ghany 1996, 490-1).²⁸

A further debate occurred on the place of ethnicity in Trinidad and Tobago with the appointment on 14 and 20 December 1994 of a Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament on Public Holidays. The report, laid in parliament on 1 May 1995, recommended that one national holiday be granted in honour of the Spiritual Baptists²⁹ and another for Indian Arrival Day. The PNM voted against the Spiritual Baptist holiday but accepted the Indian Arrival Day holiday proposal. The latter was renamed "Arrival Day," although the holiday in 1995 was called "Indian Arrival Day." Arrival Day replaced Whit Monday, indicating the loss of Catholic influence in the country.³⁰ The UNC, however, argued that the Spiritual Baptists should have been granted their particular day as well, and that "Indian" should have been included in the Arrival Day holiday title, to abate the alienation felt by both communities. Indeed, Panday had proposed that in addition to the Spiritual Baptist holiday, a separate Lord Shango Day should be established for the Orisha community on a date of their choice. On Indian Arrival Day, at the SDMS's Lakshmi Girls Hindu College, Panday announced, "I can tell you now with a great degree of confidence that in 1997, May 30th will be renamed and celebrated as Indian Arrival Day ... the Spiritual Baptists and the Orishas will have their public holiday ... and the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha will be given the green

Manning administration assumed power (Gordon 1999).

²⁸ An appeal was subsequently filed, apparently without success.

²⁹ The Shouters Prohibition Ordinance of 1917 outlawed the practice of the Shouter (Spiritual) Baptists, a Christian-Yoruba syncretic religion. The ordinance was repealed by the Gomes government on 30 March 1951 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1 363). All forms of "obeah" (West African-derived magic) were earlier banned in 1868 (Brereton 1981, 134).

³⁰ There were 330,655 Catholics in Trinidad and Tobago in 1990 (29.4 percent) as opposed to 331,733 in 1970 (35.6 percent) (ASD 1983; 1997).

light to build a Hindu Boys College if they so wish."³¹ Opposition Leader Panday gave two temporary Senatorial positions to the Spiritual Baptists so that they could argue their case in the Upper House in June 1995³² (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 171, 359-64).

Other events also occurred. After Indian Arrival Day, from 11-8 August the UWI's Institute of Social and Economic Research in association with the National Council for Indian Culture (headed by Hansley Hanoomansingh, DLP MP for Caroni East, 1966-71) organised a high-profile international Conference, "Challenge and Change: the Indian Diaspora in its Historical and Contemporary Contexts" at which Basdeo Panday presented a paper titled, "Trade Unionism, Politics and Indo-Caribbean Leadership" (Panday 1995). On 31 August 95, Independence Day, Dharmacharya Krishna Persad from the SDMS had refused the nation's highest award, the Trinity Cross, because its name did not reflect the religious diversity of Trinidad and Tobago (Ryan 1996, 330). Beginning in 1994 the Sewdass Sadhu Shiv Mandir, popularly known as the "Temple in the Sea," was being rebuilt in Carapichaima and it captured the imagination of many, inspiring a play about its original construction against colonial opposition³³ (*TG* 11 December 1995, 1). In September-October 1995, statues of the elephant-headed Hindu god Ganesh were reported around the world to be drinking milk from devotees. SDMS Secretary General Satnarine Maharaj announced it as a "sign that the time has come for

³¹ The issue of the denominational education seemed to be slowly returning to the national agenda. On 14 October 1995, in apparent response to a White Paper put out by the government, twenty representatives of denominational schools held an "urgent" meeting at St. Joseph's Convent in Port of Spain to discuss "the exclusion of any serious mention of the role of denominational boards in education" (*TE* 15 October 1995, 3).

³² The two temporary senators, however, were vocal in support of Prime Minister Manning when Panday introduced his motion of no confidence on 14 June 1995.

³³ The *mandir* was officially opened in December 1995.

Hindus to take their rightful place in society," noting the significance of its occurrence during the 150th Anniversary of Indian Arrival in Trinidad, and the general elections which had been called for 6 November 1995.³⁴

In addition to the events surrounding Indian Arrival, the PNM were faced with an escalation in serious crimes. Although in 1995 there were 61,220 reports to the police of serious and minor crimes and minor offences (a decline from the peak of 68,324 in 1988), the number of serious crimes reported reached an all-time high in 1993 at 19,547 and the number of deaths by homicide also reached at an all-time high in 1994 of 146 (*ASD* 1997). Not only was the incidence of crime made into a political issue, but the PNM's handling of the problems at times had been questionable.

In 1994 a notorious drug lord, Dole Chadee,³⁵ finally was arrested with nine other men for the murder of Hamilton Baboolal and three of his family members on 10 January that year. The main state witness in the trial, Clint Huggins, was receiving death threats; in October 1994 the government had announced that Huggins had died. The announcement, however, was later revealed as a hoax to entrap three men allegedly conspiring to kill him. Once again, the government's judgement was questioned (*CI* March 1996, 11). Meanwhile, questions surrounded another event. In July 1994 – subsequent to the prominence given to the murder of two women in Westmoorings, an elite western suburb of Port of Spain – the Trinidad and Tobago state had carried out its

³⁴ The elections were to occur on the Hindu feast day of *Kartik*; in addition it was the Hindu Diwali season, with the Diwali Nagar in Chaguanas, inaugurated in 1985, as a major gathering point. The 28 September 1995 issue of *Nature* carried a report on the milk-drinking phenomenon. In India, reportedly, the Congress Party accused it of being a vote-getting ploy by the Bharata Janata Party (*TG* 17 Oct 1995). Some viewed it similarly in Trinidad (Gibbings 1997, 53).

first execution since 1979 against convicted murderer, Glen Ashby. A two hundred page international jurists' report submitted in March 1995, however, found that the execution was illegal and that sufficient evidence existed to cite the Attorney-General Keith Sobion for contempt of court. Ashby was hanged on the Attorney-General's instruction while the Court of Appeal was in session, arguably violating the prisoner's right to due process. The hanging occurred six days before Ashby would have completed five years under sentence, and ten minutes before the receipt of a fax from the Privy Council granting him a stay of execution. Sobion responded that the report was not binding on the government. Subsequently, on 14 March 1995, a constitutional amendment bill was introduced into the Senate aimed at abolishing the right of appeal to the Privy Council on constitutional motions relating to criminal cases. In April, however, Attorney-General Sobion withdrew bill because of numerous charges that it reduced the constitutional guarantees against infringements by the executive of citizens' rights (*CI* April 1995; May 1995; July 1998; 11 June 1999).

On 20 June 1995, fifty-nine year old former Attorney-General and Minister of National Security Selwyn Richardson was ambushed and shot six times outside his home in Cascade (a northern suburb of Port of Spain) in what was described as a "Mafia-style killing." Thousands of people gathered in Port of Spain to see his funeral cortege, and a two-hour ceremony was attended by the Prime Minister and Acting President Zelayhar Hassanali. The murder, the fifty-ninth for the year, highlighted the problem of escalating crime dramatically (*CI* July 1995, 2). The following weekend, two men suspected of Richardson's murder, Abdul Qadir and Curtis Felix (members of the

³⁵ "Dole Chadee" was the alias of Namkissoon Boodram, named in the *Scott Drug Report* (1986, 15-26) as one of the most significant persons involved directly in the drug trade, with police allies going

Jamaat-al-Muslimeen) were found shot dead. At the same time, in July 1995 the government had issued writs against Abu Bakr and other members of the Jamaat for compensation estimated at several million dollars (*CI* August 1995, 11). On 11 September Prime Minister Manning denied in parliament the existence of a police "death squad," refuting the rumours that surfaced after the shooting in disputed circumstances, two weeks earlier, of another member of the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen, Abdulla Muhammed Aziz, near the UWI campus. The UNC, the Coalition for Social Justice and Human Rights, and the Law Association expressed concern at the recent shootings of criminals in questionable circumstances, including escaped murder convict Anthony "Lizard" Brideglal in April 1994 and Jeffrey Alexander in December 1994 (*CI* May 1995; October 1995). The government responded to the crime situation in August 1995 by announcing the construction, at a cost of TT\$5.5 million, of sixteen new police posts over the next six months, each staffed by twenty officers (*CI* September 1995, 11).

The PNM were also having trouble negotiating with state employees. In August 1995 workers at PETROTRIN and TRINMAR went on strike initially for four days, but then extended it. The PETROTRIN strike ended after six weeks on 18 September, and the TRINMAR strike after nine weeks on 8 October, two days after the general elections were announced (*CI* September 1995; October 1995; November 1995). In addition, up to 75 percent of the thirty-five thousand members of the PSA took part in a one-day strike on 15 September, to pressure the government into paying salary arrears totalling TT\$2 billion, accumulating since the NAR administration (*CI* October 1995, 11).

The Campaign of 1995

On 6 October Manning announced that general elections would be held on 6 November, after less than a full four years in office. This action was unprecedented. Parliament had not been due to dissolve until 13 January 1997, and the latest possible date for elections was 12 April 97 (Ghany 1996, 482-3). The San Fernando West by-election was thereby pre-empted and the local government elections postponed. The prime minister explained that having eighteen members reduced the government's "flexibility" in conducting its business to "unacceptable levels" and he therefore sought a new mandate.

Calling early elections did not avoid all party problems, however. On 9 October PNM Deputy Leader and Minister of Finance Wendell Mottley announced that he would not be standing for election. Minister John Eckstein declined to contest as well. On 11 October PNM members from two constituencies held a protest demonstration against the dropping of their sitting members, Ken Collis and Jean Pierre, Ministers of Labour and Sports, respectively.³⁶ On 14 October the PNM presented its slate of candidates, calling them the "Dream Team" (after the United States' 1992 Olympic basketball team), who would fulfil Manning's ambition to make Trinidad and Tobago "world class" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 191; Ghany 1996, 483). The PNM pledged a reduction in corporation and the top rate of income tax (which had been at 38 percent), more vigorous anti-crime measures, and that it would continue to reduce unemployment (*CI* November 1995, 3).

³⁶ Pierre was replaced in her constituency of Port of Spain South (Dr. Williams's old seat) by a candidate also named Eric Williams.

The PNM, however, seemed to be on the defensive during the campaign, often responding to issues raised by the UNC. Regarding the UNC's proposals for "national unity" and a "national front" government, Manning re-iterated the PNM's traditional hostility towards coalition government, defiantly declaring that the PNM would "fight alone, win alone, lose alone, and stand alone." Manning asked the electorate, "If not the PNM, who? It is either the PNM or chaos," and stated, "The choices facing the population are the opposition and its bacchanal or the oasis in the middle of the desert – the cool calm stability that is the PNM" (Ryan 1996, 280-1). Although these statements clearly followed the thought of Eric Williams, Manning's performance as political leader (and his slower and duller wit than Panday's, perhaps) did not give them the same effect. When Panday had invited Manning on the UNC podium to discuss and debate issues, Manning declared that he would not sit on the seat prepared for him (literally), because he might catch "political AIDS" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 309).

The day that the election date was announced in parliament, Panday arrived late. Upon his entrance, he walked over to Manning, shook his hand and said, "I just came to say goodbye," bringing laughter from members including Manning (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 179).³⁷ That evening at a meeting in San Fernando West, reportedly scheduled much in advance for the expected by-election, Panday reminded the audience that three weeks earlier he had held a press conference at which he said that Manning would declare general elections in December 1995. He jabbed, "It's just

³⁷ Siewah and Arjoonsingh (1998, vol. 1, 179-317) provide full transcripts of Panday's three key campaign speeches, one newspaper interview with *Newsday*, two television panel discussions, and Panday's paid political broadcast, during the period 6 October to 4 November.

that Manning so foolish, anybody could read him like a book."³⁸ At the beginning of his address, he declared businessman Kama Maharaj as candidate for the constituency, going on to boast, "Manning thought he would catch us. He has not caught us. In fact, he only declare the General Elections today. Within twelve hours of him declaring an election, we declare a candidate." (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 180-5).

At that meeting, he outlined the programme that the UNC would consistently stick with: devoting more resources and energy in the fight against crime; concentrating on employment generation; promising to settle public sector pay arrears of TT\$2 billion in cash (instead of bonds, as proposed by the PNM government); the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Commission; the formation of a National Steel Orchestra and the promotion of a multi-cultural entertainment and tourist industry; and the standardisation of school textbooks (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 190-201; *CI* November 1995, 3). Perhaps the most important campaign platform was the UNC's pledge to bring about "national unity," either through coalition or the formation of a "national front" government comprising all political parties. In an interview with *Newsday* on 18 October, Panday proposed constitutional change, using the Wooding Commission report of 1974 as a base, to allow small groups in society to participate in the political decision-making process. Panday argued, "We think we are a nation pulling in different directions and we feel we have the mechanism to unite us once again." In a television interview on 3 November he further underlined his view, "We have not yet become a nation, you know" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 207-8, 272).

³⁸ Manning (1999) had alleged in an interview with the author that Mottley had leaked the date to the UNC. Ryan (1996, 329) also reports the rumour that Mottley leaked the date to one of three prominent businessmen formerly supportive of the PNM – former Minister of Trade and Industry, Brian

At his 6 October speech Panday declared that it was "time to love again" and invited the NAR, labour, business, the unemployed, the homeless, and "the powerless" to unite with the UNC. ANR Robinson, Winston Dookeran, and Panday attended private meetings trying to revive "the spirit of 1986" but they did not result in any formal arrangement. On 15 October, the day after the PNM presented their own slate, the UNC presented its thirty-four candidates. Only five of the current thirteen UNC parliamentarians were standing in 1995.³⁹ No candidates were put up in Tobago because, according to Panday in his 18 October 1995 *Newsday* interview, the UNC wanted "to ensure that our intervention ... [would] not cause a PNM victory in the sister-island" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 180-5, 190-1).

The UNC slate had a number of former NAR members, including Ganga Singh (Caroni East), Kamla Persad-Bissessar (Siparia), John Humphrey (St. Augustine), Basdeo Panday (Couva North), Trevor Sudama (Oropouche), Mervyn Assam (St. Joseph), and Rawle Raphael (Arouca North). They also put up former PNM MPs Hector McLean (Tunapuna) and Ralph Maraj (Naparima). Notable, too, was the presence of Spiritual Baptist Archbishop Barbara Burke (Laventille West), who had described herself as a "traditional PNM [supporter]" (Ryan 1996, 310). Panday remarked, "When I said it was time to love again, a lot of our cynics sniggered and laughed at us. Well, when today you look at the slate of candidates that were presented to you my brothers and sisters – some from the PNM some from the NAR some from the UNC – you will see that we are in fact loving again. You see, when I said it is time to love again, they did not wait

Kuei Tung, Ishwar Galbaransingh, and Steve Ferguson – who had publicly switched allegiance to the UNC three weeks before the election.

for me to finish my sentence; they went and jump into all kinds of things. When I said it is time to love again I meant that this time the loving is going to take place in the House of the Rising Sun, but even more important, it is going to take place on a UNC bed" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 191-2, 201-3; *CI* November 1995, 3).

Other NAR members also appeared on UNC platforms, including Winston Dookeran, Clive Pantin, Suruj Rambachan,⁴⁰ Tim Gopeesingh, Jennifer Johnson, Dr. Raphael Sebastien, Felix Celestine, Dr. George Laquis, and Dr. Robert Sabga. In addition, much note was taken of a grand fund-raising party thrown in October 1995 for Basdeo Panday by former PNM minister Brian Kuei Tung (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 269, 277, 301, 307, app., 36; Ragoonath 1997, 40).

The NAR, on the other hand, got off to a slow start. On 25 April 1995 ANR Robinson declined an offer to lead the party again. He accepted it, however, as late as October. After the election date was announced, the party held a conference on 15 October and its first public meeting on 21 October, presenting its nineteen candidates and campaigning under the theme that the NAR would "Make the Difference" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 191, 265; vol. 2, 21). Although no formal UNC-NAR arrangement had been reached, fifteen of the seventeen NAR candidates in Trinidad were fighting in PNM seats. Of the five marginal PNM constituencies targeted by the UNC, the NAR fought only in Tunapuna.

³⁹ Notably absent was UNC Senator Suren Capildeo – son of Simbhoonath, nephew of Dr. Rudranath, and first cousin of Sir Vidia Naipaul – who lost the nomination for the Chaguanas seat to a relatively unknown customs officer, Manohar Ramsaran.

⁴⁰ In the *Sunday Guardian* of 5 November 1995, Selwyn Ryan referred to the support given by Dookeran, Pantin, and Rambachan to the UNC as the "grossest form of whoring" (quoted in Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 335).

On 3 November, *Morning Edition* on TV6⁴¹ invited Manning, Panday, and Robinson to discuss the coming elections. Manning declined the invitation. The interview was the first time that Panday and Robinson spoke together in public since the break-up of the NAR in 1988. Both men talked about NAR and its split, the coup, and other issues. They seemed to move from enmity to understanding live on air. At one point Panday intervened, "That question you asked, do we dream of recreating the euphoria and enthusiasm of 1986, the truth is, I dream of nothing else." After the interview, reportedly, the two leaders went for breakfast together. Manning, on the other hand, issued libel writs against Robinson, Bakr, and CCN over remarks made during the programme alleging that he had prior knowledge of the coup (*CI* November 1995, 2-3; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 257-300).

Panday and the UNC had to overcome strong scepticism, and occasional hostility, toward the possibility of an "Indian party" and an "Indian Prime Minister" coming to power in the twentieth century (Ryan 1996, 525). The persistent comment that Panday did "not want to be prime minister" perhaps reflected this inability to seriously consider such a possibility (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 176, 263).

The major pre-election polls and predictions, as well, seemed to be based on such scepticism, perhaps similar to the scepticism about the possibility that Williams and the PNM could have won a legislative majority in 1956. On 29 October, the *Express* published the SARA poll under the headline, "PNM Wins." The poll, conducted on 16-20 October, gave the PNM fifteen seats, the UNC fourteen, and the NAR two in

⁴¹ TV6 was owned by Caribbean Communications Network (CCN), formed in 1991 with former Minister of Industry and Enterprise Ken Gordon as CEO.

Tobago. Regarding the five marginal PNM constituencies, Ryan argued that if nothing changed between then and 6 November, they would go to the PNM to make a total of twenty. He wrote, "Fastforwarding the general elections to November 6 was clearly a brilliant though potentially risky stroke on the part of the Prime Minister. He caught *everybody* [including members of his government], other than his closest advisors, by surprise." Ryan argued that the strategy would have found the UNC unprepared, that potential UNC-NAR unity would be pre-empted, and that the building of a "party of the centre" (as advocated by Lloyd Best) would not be able to get off the ground. Ryan explained that "50 per cent of those polled thought that the PNM should be given another chance to govern the country. Thirteen per cent said they were disposed to return the PNM to power because they considered the UNC 'politically illegitimate and unviable.' Thirty-nine per cent, however, wanted to give the UNC a chance." Although 64 percent of Indo-Trinidadians supported Panday and 64 percent of Afro-Trinidadians supported Manning, the SARA poll indicated that 41 percent of the mixed group and 9 percent of Indo-Trinidadians favoured Manning, while only 8 percent of the mixed and 4 percent of the Afro-Trinidadians preferred Panday. Ryan concluded, "Afro-Trinidadians of all classes and genders would find it difficult to endorse Basdeo Panday as Prime Minister. Manning gets more cross-race and cross-gender support." His weekly column in the same issue argued, "It seems clear, however, that while the main text of Panday's message articulated a cross-racial appeal against the parasitic oligarchy and their spokespersons, the sub-text represented an unambiguous communal appeal." The following week, in part two of the SARA poll, Ryan elaborated, "Given the small size of the samples and the large margins of error that often manifest themselves in samples of limited size, we hesitate to say unequivocally that the PNM would win the four [Tunapuna, St. Joseph, Pointe-à-Pierre, Barataria/San Juan] seats. SARA's

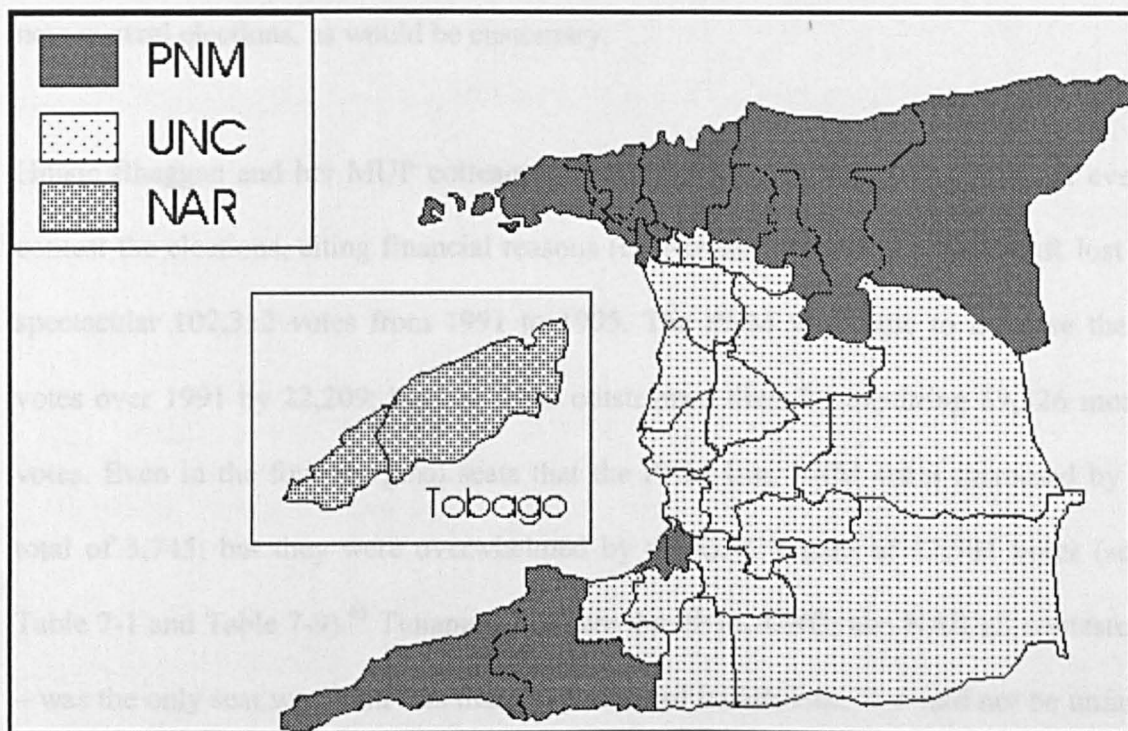
judgement, however, which is informed by the known ethnic balances in the four areas, is that the PNM is favoured to hold all four seats" (quoted in Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol., 1, 302-6).

On 5 November the *Sunday Guardian* published a poll conducted during October 29-31 by the local firm Market Facts and Opinion which also predicted that the PNM would win twenty seats, the UNC fourteen, and the NAR two. It was argued, "In the end, the odds are too great to be overcome, and the marginal seats are forecast all to be retained by the incumbents" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 306).⁴² The less prestigious papers, however, were not as sceptical about a UNC victory. On 3 November the weekly *Bomb* (owned by Satnarine Maharaj, Secretary General of the SDMS) predicted a tie between the PNM and UNC; the daily *Newsday* on 5 November published a poll conducted by Vishnu Bisram of the North American Caribbean Teachers Association of New York predicting seventeen seats for the UNC, seventeen seats for the PNM, and two for the NAR, with the PNM receiving four percent more voter support than the UNC; and the weekly *Mirror* (edited by Raffique Shah) on 5 November stated, "Washington-based political experts assisting the United National Congress (UNC) in its bid for government are confident that the party will win general elections tomorrow" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 302-3, 313).

⁴² A report in the *Mirror* of 17 November 1995 suggested that "the *Guardian* published a highly questionable conclusion in favour of the PNM ... [which upon publication had] surprised market statisticians at MFO" (quoted in Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 335).

As with the PNM in 1956, the UNC did not gain an outright majority in 1995.⁴³ It was the first tie in Trinidad and Tobago's history, with the UNC winning seventeen seats, the PNM seventeen, and the NAR two (see Figure 7-1 and Table 7-8).

Figure 7-1. Distribution of Constituencies by Party, 1995 General Elections



Created by author from GORTT (1991) and LaGuerre (1997, app.)

Table 7-8. Election Statistics, 1995 General Elections

	Number of candidates	Number of seats won	Total Votes	% of Votes
PNM	36	17	256,159	48.8%
UNC	34	17	240,372	45.8%
NAR	19	2	24,983	4.8%
NIP⁴⁴	17	0	1,590	0.3%
MUP	5	0	2,123	0.4%
NTM	2	0	83	0.0%
TPV	1	0	16	0.0%
Rejected		0	4,985	0.9%
TOTALS	114	36	530,311	100%

Source: LaGuerre (1997, app.)

⁴³ A point which Panday reiterated right up to 25 February 2000 in the House of Representatives (GORTT 2000b).

⁴⁴ LaGuerre (1997, app.) does not indicate what the parties' initials stand for.

Voter turnout was 63.3 percent, slightly less than the 65.8 percent who voted in 1991, but because the electorate had grown the actual number of voters increased by 7,839 over the 1991 amount. Despite the much larger electorate (837,741 in 1995 as opposed to 794,486 in 1991), there had been no revision of the constituency boundaries for the new general elections, as would be customary.

Hulsie Bhaggan and her MUP colleagues lost their deposits, and NJAC did not even contest the elections, citing financial reasons (*CI* November 1995, 3). The NAR lost a spectacular 102,352 votes from 1991 to 1995. The PNM were able to increase their votes over 1991 by 22,209; but the UNC outstripped them by capturing 89,326 more votes. Even in the four marginal seats that the PNM lost, PNM votes increased by a total of 3,745; but they were overwhelmed by the UNC's gain of 12,781 votes (see Table 7-1 and Table 7-9).⁴⁵ Tunapuna – where the PNM, UNC, and NAR all contested – was the only seat won with less than 50 percent of ballots cast. It would not be unfair to say that the UNC lost a majority in the 1995 general elections by 244 votes there.

Table 7-9. Distribution of Votes in the Five Marginal Constituencies, 1995 General Elections

CONSTITUENCY	PNM	UNC	NAR	OTHER	REJECTS	% VOTED	MARGIN
Pointe-à-Pierre	7,055	9,367	–	83	156	69.7%	2,312
St. Joseph	6,960	7,564	–	396	130	65.6%	604
Barataria/San Juan	6,666	7,611	–	105	89	64.0%	945
Ortoire/Mayaro	8,201	8,944	–	–	274	69.4%	743
Tunapuna	7,467	7,223	368	58	103	67.1%	244
TOTALS	36,349	40,709	368	642	752	67.2%	4,848

Source: Siewah and Arjoonsingh (1998, vol. 1, 324-9)

⁴⁵ Ryan's stubborn argument (1996, 276) that the elections were won by the UNC because the PNM did not sufficiently bring out its voters seems insupportable, except by truism ("my own view is that the PNM would have done better if more of its supporters had turned out to vote") and rejection of the electoral data in favour of racial accounting and presumption of voting behaviour.

Not only did the UNC hold the Pointe-à-Pierre seat, it captured Ortoire/Mayaro, St. Joseph, and Barataria/San Juan – seats which, since 1961, only the NAR in 1986 had been able to capture from the PNM. The excitement was palpable at the UNC headquarters when the election results were read,⁴⁶ while at the PNM camp Manning told his supporters to “go peacefully to your homes” – another inappropriate, even if well-intentioned, remark that would draw criticism at the highest levels even five years later (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 320; GORTT 2000b).

Upon hearing the final results, Panday addressed his audience,

As you would have known by now, the results are 17-17-2, 17 for the PNM, 17 to the UNC and 2 to the NAR. That means that there is no single Party in the House at the moment with a clear majority. Why these results have come about? It would appear to me, brothers and sister, that Almighty god [*sic*] moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform (*Cheers mixed with Applause*).

As you know, I have always contended and always argue that because of the highly plural nature of our society, the highly divisive and fragmented nature of our society, no one single group can run Trinidad and Tobago successfully to the exclusion of other groups in the society. (*Applause*). Based upon that analysis, I have argued for the need for a National Front Government. But there were groups in the society who did not want a National Front Government. Groups who say “we shall fight alone and we shall struggle alone” and apparently they have lost alone. (Laughter and Applause). My brothers, my brothers and sisters, man proposes but God disposes (*Cheers*). And what you want may not be what you get. (*Applause*). And so those who do not want unity, unity will be forced upon them. Because God knows that it is only in unity that you shall be prosperous. Only in unity everyone will have a chance. Only in unity we shall deal with crime. Only in unity we shall deal with our educational problems and high prices. God loves this nation and He is forcing us to unite. (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 321)

⁴⁶ See Premdas and Ragoonath (1998) and Ryan (1996, 1999a, 1999b) for ethnic interpretations of the 1995 and 1996 elections as Indian ascendance to power.

On 9 November between 4:10 p.m. and 4:12 p.m., Basdeo Panday was sworn in as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, after securing the support of ANR Robinson, his previous partner in government (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 333).

The PNM suffered its second loss in ten years. A combination of the UNC's and Panday's political skill, Manning's political blunders, a rise in Indian consciousness sparked by the 150th anniversary of Indian arrival, and perhaps a vague dissatisfaction with the economic and social situation (despite the objective improvements) served to dislodge the Manning administration. The UNC was to be the latest administration in a parliament that changed leadership in every term from 1981. The new Panday administration, Trinidad and Tobago's first Indian-led government, now had the opportunity to break the pattern and last long enough in office to leave a distinctive legacy over and above the political management of the generic and fairly standardised structural adjustment, outward-oriented, and social development strategies promoted since the 1980s by the international financial and development organisations, followed by Trinidad and Tobago administrations since 1988.

CHAPTER 8

“A DIFFICULT COUNTRY TO GOVERN”: THE UNC GOVERNMENT, 1995-2000

In this chapter, the UNC administration is analysed from November 1995 up to May 2000, a matter of months before general elections which are constitutionally due at the end of the year. Whether or not they succeed in the general elections of 2000/1, it seems safe to say that the 1995-2000 Panday administration will stand out as one of the three most important terms of government in Trinidad and Tobago's short history, the other two being the Williams administration of 1956-61 and the Robinson administration of 1986-91. Analysis of this period – what aspects of the administration have been salient, what have been ephemeral, which actions we can view as successful, and which ones as failures – will be better determined after the next general elections. However, at this point it is possible to discern themes that have persisted in the controversy-laden past five years. One could argue that the Panday administration has in some measure moved beyond generic macro-economic structural adjustment policy and stamped an identifiable character into the government. The UNC, and Basdeo Panday in particular, consistently have held, reinforced, and developed a fairly distinctive vision whose

fundamentals were articulated during the campaign of 1995:¹ a greater emphasis on law and order in society, national unity through the affirmation of cultural plurality, and a results-focused approach to economic and social development. Beginning in his 1997 Independence Day (31 August) address, Panday had articulated his vision as the building of a "Total Quality Nation" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 145; Panday 1999).

Equally persistent has been the intense opposition to the Panday administration from a number of quarters – the media, the political parties, the THA, the trade unions, and other more diffuse groups and interests – accusing the government of bellicosity, racism, and corruption/nepotism.² Disputes between the government and its various centres of opposition have been continuous and overlapping, sometimes with two or three events peaking simultaneously, as on 28 May 1998 when a bitter two-month strike at the UWI had come to an end, a Cabinet rationalisation had been announced in a nationwide broadcast, and the *Express* led that day's news with unsubstantiated PSA allegations of racism by the state-owned Airports Authority.

Though controversy is not new, perhaps distinguishing the UNC administration from other post-Williams governments has been Panday's seemingly limitless determination, and great ability, to prevail over his sundry opposition and to govern (in Panday's phraseology, "to do my duty"). His style has reminded more than one observer of Eric

¹ Indeed, Panday's vision expressed throughout his political career, which started in 1966, has been remarkably consistent. This is well documented in the collections of his speeches by Siewah and Moonilal (1991) and Siewah and Arjoonsingh (1998).

² For a view of the UNC government as essentially a pro-Indian administration practising discrimination against Africans, see Ryan (1999b, 233-49).

Williams.³ The UNC's situation has been similar to the PNM's in 1956 as well, as both won their elections with less than 50 percent of votes and seats, and crystallised hostile opposition around them. Panday's missionary zeal⁴ has generated and sustained strong enthusiasm and fearful resistance. At the time of writing his success has yet to be determined.

"The Government of National Unity": Establishing the UNC Regime, 1995-6

After the elections on 6 November 1995, parties had started negotiating support for a Prime Minister, who was to be formally appointed by President Noor Hassanali.⁵ Manning suggested that as leader of the party with the greatest number of votes, and still the substantive Prime Minister, he was entitled to form the next government. He had argued that "national unity" was a guise under which the role of the Opposition would be undermined and, curiously, that its "net effect" would be to divide society. President Hassanali, however, had held private meetings with Robinson to discuss the formation of the new government, in the absence of consultation with the incumbent Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, and the Leader of Opposition, Basdeo Panday.⁶ Ken Gordon, CEO of CCN and former NAR Minister, had put Robinson in contact with Manning following a request from a PNM government minister, but Manning had

³ For example, Selwyn Ryan, the *Independent*, PNM founding member Muriel Donawa-McDavidson, and long-time senior public servant Reginald Dumas (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 120, 278, 329; *TG* 17 July 1999, 8).

⁴ This is perhaps evidenced in the amount of legislation that had been introduced in the House of Representatives between 1996 and 1998, averaging fifty-one per year, surpassed only by the Williams government in 1971-81.

⁵ Following section 76(1b) of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, the President had to be satisfied that the member appointed as Prime Minister commanded the support of a majority of members of Parliament (Ghany 1997a, 17). Members of government would then be chosen by the Prime Minister.

apparently delayed meeting with Robinson. Meanwhile, Robinson presented to Panday an agreement on 8 November, which was accepted in principle. On 9 November Panday had been sworn in as Prime Minister by President Hassanali (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 336-7; Ghany 1997a, 22-3; Gordon 1999; Ryan 1999b, 236).

Panday's Inaugural Address to the Nation on 10 November had been magnanimous, thanking outgoing Prime Minister Manning and calling on the entire population – including the PNM – to work together for the next five years:

Fellow Citizens, Ladies and Gentlemen, my Sisters and Brothers. I thank you most sincerely for the confidence you have reposed in me and the Party which I have the honour to lead, the United National Congress. On behalf of my colleagues and on my own behalf, I accept that honour with great humility, but with an even greater determination to serve all the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to thank all those who have worked so hard to bring about this moment. I know how many resources, how much energy, sweat, and emotional stress you have invested in this campaign. I ask you to accept your victory with humility and generosity.

Trinidad and Tobago is a difficult country to govern because of its highly pluralistic nature, its diversity and its fragmentation. I have always been of the firm conviction that without unity this nation cannot go very far. Our first task, therefore, must be to unite this nation as it has never been united before. We must make sure that every man, woman and child in this beloved land of ours genuinely and sincerely feel that they belong. Our first task is to ensure that every human being who inhabits our land is made to feel wanted, secure and safe, that he or she will not be discriminated against for any reason whatsoever, and that here each and everyone shall truly find an equal place. No one needs feel insecure because of a change of Government. I regard your safety as my most important and immediate task. I have already contacted the security forces and I have been assured of their support in protection this nation from harm both from within and without.

... In keeping with our philosophy, and in keeping with our promise to unite this nation, I have invited all the parties that won seats in the House of Representatives to join with the United National Congress to establish a

⁶ Ghany (1997) contrasts the actions of President Hassanali to the more passive role taken by Queen Elizabeth II after the British parliament was "hung" by the 28 February 1974 general elections.

government of national unity, a national front government, so that together we may confront and win the battle against crime and drugs, unemployment and poverty, the alienation of our youths and our senior citizens, rising prices and the deteriorating public utilities. (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 337-8)

On 11 November 1995, the UNC and the NAR signed a nine-point⁷ Heads of Agreement, calling for parliamentary "decision-making by consensus"; the expeditious introduction of legislation "to implement the national consensus agreement on Tobago contained in the House Paper No. 6 of 1978"; the "integration" of the "unity process"; the utilisation of the "human resources" of both parties "in the formation and continuance of the new government"; the establishment of legislative provisions, mechanisms, and a code of conduct to effect "the principles of Truth, the Rule of Law, Transparency in Public Affairs and Morality and integrity [*sic*] in Public Office"; the restructuring of the political system "to afford representation to sections of the electorate who by reason of non-alignment with major political groupings are denied participation in the governance of the Country"; further decentralisation at all levels of government; the establishment of mechanisms "to harness the energy, talents, skills and enterprise of the entire population in the nation-building process"; and mechanisms for conflict resolution between the affected parties (in Ryan 1996, 344-5; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 396).

The PNM, perhaps put in an unwinnable position, rejected the UNC's call to join a national front government, and accused the UNC of offering PNM members money to cross the floor (*CI* January 1996, 10). By the opening of Parliament on 27 November, Panday assembled a twenty-one member cabinet that included Robinson (NAR MP for

Tobago East) in the newly-created post of Minister Extraordinaire, Special Responsibility for Tobago, Adviser to the Prime Minister; Pamela Nicholson (NAR MP for Tobago West) as Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports; former PNM minister Senator Brian Kuei Tung (not a member of the UNC party) as Minister of Finance; Senator Joseph Theodore (a retired army brigadier, also not a member of the UNC party) as Minister of National Security; Senator Daphne Phillips (a lecturer in sociology from the UWI, also not a member of the UNC) as Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs; former PNM minister Ralph Maraj (MP for Nariva) as Minister of Foreign Affairs; MP for St. Joseph Mervyn Assam (formerly of the ONR and the NAR, and former High Commissioner to the United Kingdom) as Minister of Trade and Industry; and MP for Siparia, Kamla Persad-Bissessar (formerly of the NAR), as Attorney-General, the first woman to hold the position.⁸ Hector McLean (defeated UNC candidate for Tunapuna in 1995, and former PNM Minister, 1971-8) was elected Speaker of the House (*CI* December 1995, 3-4).

The *Express*, the *Guardian*, and its columnists Overand Padmore (PNM Minister from 1971-86), Frank Brassington (Honorary Secretary of the DLP from 1957-60), and Allan Harris from Tapia, warmly congratulated Panday as the deserving victor in the elections (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 331-4). Manning argued that he had lost office seventeen months before it was necessary because the country felt that it was time for an "Indian Prime Minister" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 345). At the same time, however, there had been speculation as to whether the Panday administration

⁷ The *Express* of 12 November 1995 reported that the 8 November agreement contained six points (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 337).

⁸ On 2 February 1996 Persad-Bissessar was replaced by MP for Couva South, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, in what many interpreted as a planned strategy, due to the general hostility directed at Maharaj

would last its entire term (*EIU* 1998b, 12; Ryan 1996, 373; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 331). Veteran political columnist Percy Cezaire wrote in the *Guardian* on 21 November 1995,

It will take all of Panday's long experience and well-known political skills to chart a stable course through such choppy waters.... Mr. Panday and Mr. Robinson have been thrown together in a repeat of a political experiment that they both failed at before. However, on this occasion, the role of the Prime Minister is reversed. It may be that Mr. Panday may turn out to be much better at keeping them together than Mr. Robinson was on the last occasion. (in Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 333)

Panday, who had been known for attacking the "parasitic oligarchy", further demonstrated his commitment to the principle of national unity by meeting in December 1995 with over two hundred representatives from the private sector in preparation for the 1996 budget. Panday informed his audience that the government's prime objective was to solve the unemployment problem, while another main aim was to maintain the country's business climate (*CI* January 1996, 10). On 10 January 1996 Minister Kuei Tung presented a budget that managed to please both the National Trade Union Centre (NATUC)⁹ and the Chamber of Commerce: the government increased expenditure, reduced the rate of taxation for individuals and businesses at all levels, removed VAT from twelve basic food and household items, announced payment of

during the 1995 campaign. Persad-Bissessar was moved to the new Ministry of Legal Affairs, and the Cabinet was expanded to twenty-two persons.

⁹ NATUC was formed on 12 June 1991 as the single umbrella body representing all of the country's trade unions, patching the split of 1965 (*Vanguard* 19 June 1991).

TT\$90 million in cash to approximately forty-five thousand public servants,¹⁰ and maintained a reasonable level of fiscal balance¹¹ (*CI* February 1996, 4).

Demonstrating its commitment to recognising "alienated" groups, on 26 January 1996 the UNC government declared 30 March "Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day," a national holiday replacing Republic Day (held on 24 September). PNM Leader Patrick Manning protested the removal of a national holiday (and a legacy of Eric Williams) for a sectional interest.¹² In addition, "Arrival Day" was renamed "Indian Arrival Day"¹³ (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 359-64; *TE* 27 April 1996, 2). Against the notion that he would be concerned mainly with the Indians of central Trinidad, in March 1996 Prime Minister Panday embarked on a tour of Beetham Estate, Sea Lots, Laventille, and Tobago, the core areas of the PNM and the NAR (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, app., 15; GORTT 1996b, 2). In addition, in May 1996 the UNC government gave a "hero's welcome," with VIP and dignitary status, to Trinidad-born Black Power advocate Kwame Ture (whom the Williams government declared a prohibited immigrant in 1968). Ture, who was the guest of honour at the Emancipation

¹⁰ The PSA engaged in a two-day work stoppage on 18-9 March 1996 to press for final resolution of the payment, which had been owed to them through the tenure of two previous administrations. The final disbursement had amounted to TT\$345 million in bonds and TT\$470 million in cash (*CI* April 1996, 10; *Newsday* 19 June 1998, 13).

¹¹ The projected surplus of TT\$284 million became a deficit of TT\$158.4 million, or 0.5 percent of nominal GDP (CBTT 1999; *CI* February 1996, 4).

¹² The original holiday to be replaced was Easter Monday, as announced in the House of Representatives (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 364). Easter Monday was kept after Tobagonians protested that the ending of the four-day Easter weekend would hurt its tourist industry. Interestingly, the UNC accepted the Tobagonians' arguments as opposed to the PNM's. The politics surrounding the granting of Liberation Day might be seen as constituting a significant change in philosophy and cultural hegemony, as sectional interests seem to have outweighed nationalist and previously-dominant established Christian ones, under a Hindu-led administration. For further elaboration see the author's "Post-Modern Politics: Cyberprotest, Virtual Crises, and the Post-Creole" (*TTR* Labour Day 1997, 20-3).

¹³ In the first issue (June 1998) of its new party paper, *Magnum*, the PNM continued to assert that Arrival Day was the appropriate name for the holiday celebrated on 30 May (*TE* 7 June 1998, 33).

Support Committee's (ESC)¹⁴ Emancipation celebrations, was also pledged US\$1,000 per month from the Trinidad and Tobago government to support his cancer treatment¹⁵ (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 393, vol. 2, 11-2; Ryan 1999a, 224).

Panday, on leave but still titular President of the ATS&GWTU, also marched in Fyzabad on Labour Day (19 June)¹⁶ as he had done for the past thirty years. His presence as Prime Minister, however, made the occasion a first, as no other head of government had done so before, and he was welcomed warmly for the next two years by Errol McLeod, President of NATUC¹⁷ and the OWTU, and former ULF MP for Oropouche (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 338-40).

Controversy, however, came early in the term. On 4 January 1996 Manning held a meeting of the PNM Arouca South constituency, declaring that there would be "heat in the Parliament and heat in the streets of the country after the honeymoon is over" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 383). In the budget debate the following week, Panday had alleged that Manning's statements were meant to encourage his supporters to "resort to violence and violent demonstrations to bring this government down" (*CI* February 1996, 4). Manning denied the allegations, and the *Guardian* published an editorial on 18 January 1996 titled, "Panday's Alarum," criticising the prime minister for making "alarmist and unsubstantiated charges against his political foes," and

¹⁴ Khafra Kambon, chairman of the ESC (which he helped found in 1992), was also a founding member of NJAC (which he left in 1983 on the eve of the local government elections). In May 1969, he and Basdeo Panday, then a lawyer for the OWTU, were jailed together after participating in the TIWU bus strike, protesting against the ISA and the Williams government (Kambon 1988, 180; Kambon 1999).

¹⁵ Ture died of cancer in 1998.

¹⁶ This date commemorates the burning of Corporal Charlie King at the beginning of the Butler Riots of 1937 and was officially declared Trinidad and Tobago's Labour Day in 1972.

¹⁷ Panday was also a founder member and First Vice-President of NATUC (*Vanguard* 19 June 1991).

reminding readers of the UNC's links to the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen (in Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, app., 9-11). Four days later, the *Guardian* published an article, "Chutney Rising – Panday," which further offended Panday because of its alleged sub-textual suggestion that he was a narrowly "Indian" prime minister.

This began a feud between the UNC and the media that would continue, often quite intensely, for the entire term of government. On 31 January 1996 Panday announced that the *Guardian* would no longer be invited to government functions. He alleged that the paper was biased against his government and called for the dismissal of editor-in-chief Jones P. Madeira whom he described as "a racist, vicious and spiteful." In February, Ken Gordon, Harold Hoyte of the *Barbados News*, David de Caires of the *Stabroek News* (Guyana)¹⁸ met with Panday to broker a truce. The ban was lifted and it was agreed that an independent press complaints commission would be established. The *Guardian* management later decided to install an editorial board to guarantee the paper's independence (*CI* March 1996, 10).

On 10 March, Attorney-General Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj announced that the government intended to revise the law of libel to "make it more difficult for the media to misuse and abuse" their freedom. Ken Gordon expressed opposition to the suggestion and on 31 March the Inter-American Press Association board of directors, meeting in Costa Rica, called on the governments of Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda and the Turks and Caicos Islands to cease "harassment" of the press. On 1 April Alwin Chow was "constructively dismissed" by the *Guardian* (owned by Trinidad Publications Ltd., part of the Ansa-McAl conglomerate) and by May, twenty

¹⁸ Both newspapers were associated with CCN.

editors, senior journalists, and other contributors resigned from the paper, including Jones P. Madeira (who officially vacated his post as Editor-in-Chief on 2 May) and former UNC MP Huslie Bhaggan.¹⁹ In addition, on 10 and 12 April the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MATT) held a National Symposium on the Freedom of the Press. Ansa-McAl's chairman, Anthony Sabga, and managing director, Michael Mansoor, were unapologetic and invited other dissenters to leave as well, pointing to the *Guardian's* editorial policy that it maintain its independence "without forgetting that it was part of a conglomerate" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 365-9; *CI* April 1996; May 1996; Ryan 1996, 392).

The fight between the UNC and the press had occurred at the same time as much fear (and sometimes indignation) was being expressed by Afro-Trinidadians, in particular by newspaper columnists and calypsonians,²⁰ about their position under an "Indian government." Anxiety had been mounting over the firing of black CEO's at state-owned enterprises, including the NGC, WASA, PETROTRIN, the Point Lisas Development Company, TIDCO, ICN, and the National Flour Mills, whose new chairmen were all Indo-Trinidadian.²¹ In parliament in March 1996, PNM MP for

¹⁹ David Cuffy who wrote the "Chutney Rising" article stayed on and criticised his editors' attempts to "gallery" for public attention through their resignations. Madeira was replaced by former editor of the *Express* Owen Baptiste. Those who left the *Guardian* founded the *Independent*, which started publication on 10 May 1996 and was financed by CL Financial. On 21 August 1998, the *Independent* was purchased by CCN, part of the Neal and Massey conglomerate (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 365-9; vol. 2, 132).

²⁰ Prominent persons such as *Express* editor Lennox Grant (*TE* 9 June 1996, 6), Calypso Monarch Cro Cro (in Ryan 1996, 523-4), poet and artist LeRoi Clarke (in Ryan 1996, 347), NJAC leader Makandaal Daaga (formerly Geddes Granger) (in Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 332), political scientist Selwyn Ryan (in Persad 1997, 3-4; *TE* 23 April 1996, 9), poet and author Wayne Brown (*Independent* 28 May 1996, 11; Persad 1997, 6-7), and journalist Gregory Stoute (*Newsday* 19 June 1996, 15) all expressed grave fears, sometimes verging on hysteria, about the implications of a UNC Government, such as the ending of liberal democracy or the emergence of an "axis of three 'East Indian' states (Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname)" marginalising Afro-Caribbean people.

²¹ Former chief executive George Charles from the National Flour Mills sued the government for TT\$700,000, and NGC's former managing director Malcolm Jones was awarded TT\$1.1 million in an out of court settlement, both for wrongful dismissal (*CI* July 1996, 11).

Diego Martin Central Ken Valley expressed concern that only one of the twelve boards appointed up to that time had a non-Indian chairman (Ryan 1996, 358-61; *CI* March 1996; July 1996). Also causing anxiety was the UNC's desire to "depoliticise" and restructure the URP to provide "support to a wider cross section of the unemployed" (GORTT 1996b, 30). The PNM criticised the government for reducing the number of URP projects in PNM areas,²² and implied racist and partisan motives. It should be noted, however, that the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen, the NAR, and even UNC members also complained about the lack of URP projects (Ryan 1996, 361-4; Ryan 1999b, 232, 241-3).

Dissatisfaction with URP allocations led to the NAR National Council on 31 March 1996 unanimously passing a resolution that "the covenant entered into known as the Heads of Agreement ... has been breached by the UNC as demonstrated in the open discrimination shown to NAR members in respect of Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) job placements." The resolution was passed in the absence of NAR Leader ANR Robinson who was out of the country at the time. Seemingly to thwart the discontent, at the NAR's Eighth Annual Conference on 21 April 1996 Robinson re-emphasised his commitment to the UNC-NAR government, recounting the reasons for entering into the arrangement: he rejected suggestions that NAR should have formed a coalition for racial reasons with the PNM; Manning's record of poor performance and his "rejection" at the polls did not warrant support; and Manning's remarkable slowness to meet after Robinson had contacted him stood in marked contrast to Panday's willingness to

²² PNM MP for Diego Martin East Colm Imbert in April 1996 complained in parliament that the new government started the 1996 URP Programme (on 4 March 1996) with a total of only six projects, as opposed to twenty which the PNM would normally allocate (Ryan 1996, 362). By the end of the year, the government recorded 650 infrastructural projects in nine sub-regions in Trinidad, with an incurred

discuss. Robinson argued that the NAR was not an organisation like a trade union, primarily concerned about welfare of its members, but a political party aspiring to lead the country as a whole. Referring to his "experience of the 1986-1991 NAR government" he emphasised the importance of settling differences internally, and accordingly he "deliberately" maintained a "low profile" to ensure stability of the government, as a "necessary condition of law and order in the country" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 396-400; vol. 2, app., 17-21).

On the economic front, the major development had been the signing on 20 June 1996 of seven agreements covering financial and construction arrangements for the US\$1 billion Atlantic LNG project at Point Fortin. The terms included renegotiation of the "infamous" 1991 gas supply contract, which had committed the NGC to buy gas at a higher price from Amoco than the company could sell it to industries at Point Lisas; a commitment by the consortium to spend US\$100 million on local inputs; and a commitment of US\$8 million in support for a national skills development centre. On 30 April 1996 Energy Minister Senator Finbar Gangar had announced in the Senate that TT\$12 billion in new investment had been finalised up to that point in 1996, and that investments totalling TT\$10 billion were under consideration.

On 8 May TTMC's second plant was commissioned, increasing the country's installed methanol capacity to 11 percent of the world's total. CIL had also secured a financing package totalling US\$84.2 million to upgrade the plant and bring it into line with World Bank environmental standards. In addition, the Amoco oil company announced a new

expenditure of TT\$87 million, creating 87,883 employment opportunities and employing a total of 42,296 persons (GORTT 1996b, 31).

natural gas find on 9 April, and on 22 May Prime Minister Panday announced that bidding had been opened for production-sharing contracts on nine new blocks in the deep waters off the east coast (*CI* February 1996; March 1996; May 1996). In addition, in December 1995 the World Bank approved a loan of US\$51 million to help finance a basic education project (*CI* December 1995, 10).

The UNC's determination to fight crime was highlighted by the start of the Dole Chadee murder trial on 10 June 1996. Chadee had been due to stand trial in November 1994, but he had filed a constitutional motion seeking postponement on the grounds that press publicity precluded his right to a fair trial. On 19 February 1996 the motion was rejected by the High Court and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The following day, state witness Clint Huggins was murdered after he left his safe house against the advice of the military. The state prosecution team then secured the co-operation of one of the nine men charged by offering him life imprisonment. On 4 June the government passed an amendment to the Legal Profession Act to ensure that the English-based prosecution and defence teams in the trial were entitled to practice in Trinidad and Tobago. Justice Lionel Jones also issued three orders restricting reporting of the proceedings, together with a further three orders banning the media from saying what the first three orders contained. On 14 June *Mirror* editor Ken Ali was jailed for fourteen days as a result of a complaint from the head of the defence team about a report in that day's *Mirror* about a "bombshell witness." The judge also banned media houses from reporting Ali's sentencing. In addition, *Mirror* reporter Sharmain Baboolal was fined TT\$1,000 for a description in the same issue of a minor courtroom incident. The *Mirror* group and the *Independent* filed constitutional motions in the High Court against the banning orders, and MATT highlighted the issue by organising its first

public meeting (*CI* March 1996; July 1996).²³ In the middle of this affair the local government election had been called.

*The UNC Becoming "Rampant": The Local Government Elections and the Crossovers,
1996-7*

The local government elections postponed by the 1995 general elections were called for 24 June 1996, less than eight months into the UNC-NAR administration's term in government. The UNC and the NAR furthered their cooperation by dividing constituencies among themselves, and they staged a joint unity platform at Arima on 21 June 1996 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 22-7). Some disagreements occurred, however, and both parties fielded candidates for Chaguaramas/Glencoe in the Diego Martin Regional Corporation and San Juan West/Caledonia in San Juan/Laventille.²⁴

On 5 January 1996, two months after the general elections, the PNM had endured a significant loss when Manning's three Deputy Leaders – Wendell Mottley, Keith Rowley, and Augustus Ramrekeringh – resigned from their posts after failing to persuade Manning to seek re-election. On 11 February 1996, however, Manning was re-elected by the party's general council, who also passed a resolution expressing full confidence in his leadership (*CI* February 1996; March 1996). The PNM's statements in opposition had been mainly negative, even alarmist, regularly making wild claims

²³ The government's determination to prosecute came against the background of the murder on 8 May in New York of the only state witness in the case relating to the shooting of Selwyn Richardson. The accused was set free, and that month the US State Department issued an advisory notice to prospective visitors noting that violent crime was on the rise (*CI* June 1996, 10).

without substantiation: in April 1996, for example, Manning declared that the government's attacks on the media presaged attacks on the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and that the general elections of November 1995 would be the last free elections in Trinidad and Tobago; later in that month he claimed that the government had plans to place him under "house arrest"; and in July 1996 he charged the UNC with committing the "worst racists [*sic*] acts ever perpetrated by any Government in Trinidad and Tobago" (Ryan 1996, 361, 369).

Interest in the elections was strong, as 51,075 more people voted in 1996 than in 1992, resulting in a voter turnout of 44.0 percent, the highest ever for local government elections (see Table 8-1).

Table 8-1. Election Statistics, 1996 Local Government Elections

	Number of candidates	Number of seats won	Total Votes	% of Votes
PNM	124	63	155,585	43.7%
UNC	91	61	177,848	49.9%
NAR	35	0	20,713	5.8%
Independent	8	0	2,113	0.6%
Rejected Ballots			2,761	0.8%
TOTALS	258	124	359,020	100.0%

Source: GORTT ([1997b], 291-5)

The results for the UNC and PNM, however, were equivocal and both sides claimed victory. The two parties controlled seven corporations each, not unlike the even split of seats in parliament. The PNM, however, won sixty-three seats as opposed to the UNC's sixty-one, despite the UNC's leadership of government. This was the first time that an

²⁴ Both these seats were won by the PNM, with both the UNC and NAR losing their deposits in Chaguaramas/Glencoe, and the NAR losing its deposit in San Juan West/Caledonia (GORTT [1997b]: 291-5)

incumbent government was not able to win a majority of seats in a local government election.

On the other hand, the UNC did have a strong base on which to claim a measure of victory. For one, it took over from the PNM three Regional Corporations: Sangre Grande in the northeast, Rio Claro/Mayaro in the southeast, and Siparia (which was tied at four seats each, but won by the UNC by the drawing of lots) in the "deep south." The UNC for the first time controlled a Municipal Corporation as well, since Chaguanas had been made a Borough in 1991.²⁵ Significantly, the UNC also were able to poll 22,263 more votes than the PNM. The UNC exceeded their 1992 tally by 64,346. The PNM, too, increased their votes, but by a smaller margin of 767. Lloyd Best, whose Tapia House Group had not contested an election since the NAR was formed in 1986, declared that the UNC were becoming "rampant" and that the PNM needed to court more actively and astutely, like the UNC were, the smaller tribal groupings, particularly the Tobagonians as represented by the NAR (Ryan 1996, 378-9; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 43-6; Best 1999).

If none could claim outright victory in the 24 June elections, its aftermath unlocked the political balance in favour of the UNC. On 18 August 1996 the PNM general council agreed to a proposal from Manning that the party's elections for leadership positions should be brought forward by a year to take place at a convention on 13 October 1996 (*CI* September 1996, 11). Manning was challenged by Tobago-born Dr. Keith Rowley –

²⁵ The population of the Borough of Chaguanas (covering twenty-three square kilometres) according to the 1990 census was 57,311, compared to the population of Port of Spain (covering ten square kilometres) at 46,012 (*ASD* 1994/5,1). The increasing importance of the new borough is illustrated by anthropologist Daniel Miller of the University of London, who has used Chaguanas to understand

MP for Diego Martin West, former Deputy Leader, and former Minister of Agriculture (1991-5) – who led a slate of fifteen candidates contesting all the party posts. Significantly, Rowley's slate included Kamaluddin Mohammed (PNM Deputy Leader 1971-87, Minister 1956-86, MP for Barataria 1956-86), Marilyn Gordon (former MP for Arouca and Minister of Sport, Culture and Youth Affairs, 1981-6), and Norma Lewis Phillips (former MP for Diego Martin East and Minister of Health and Environment, 1981-6). This was a fundamental challenge to Manning, who had "purged" the PNM of its "old guard" in 1987. In addition, five of the PNM's seventeen MPs, including former Deputy Speaker of the House Rupert Griffith, were also on Rowley's slate. Every post was won by the Manning slate, however, whose supporters were alleged to be at the centre of violence and hooliganism at the convention (*TG* 13 October 1996; 14 October 1996; 20 October; *TE* 20 October 1996, 10, 13; *CI* November 1996, 9; *EIU* 1998a, 11; Ghany 1996, 413; see Table 8-2).

Table 8-2. PNM Leadership Election Results, 1996

	MANNING'S SLATE		ROWLEY'S SLATE	
LEADER	Manning	448 (62%)	Rowley	279 (38%)
CHAIRMAN	Baboolal	402 (57%)	Mohammed	305 (43%)
LADY VICE-CHAIRMAN	Lewis-Phillip	401 (56%)	Gordon	313 (44%)
SUBTOTALS		1251 (58%)		897 (42%)
ALL POSITIONS		6,588 (64%)		3,667 (36%)

Source: *Trinidad Guardian* (20 October 1996, 9)

Manning named as Deputy Political Leaders Opposition Chief Whip, Ken Valley, and his campaign manager, Joan Yuille-Williams.²⁶ The contest, the broadest of its kind,²⁷

Trinidad as a whole, in his work *Unwrapping Christmas* (1993), *Modernity* (1994), *Capitalism* (1997), and *The Internet* (Miller and Slater, forthcoming).

²⁶ At the PNM Annual Convention of December 1997, Senator Nafeeza Mohammed, niece of Kamaluddin Mohammed, was named the third deputy leader (*TG* 28 December 1997).

²⁷ The challenges to the leadership by ANR Robinson in 1970 and Karl Hudson-Phillips in 1973 were the other instances of organised dissent within the party. See Robinson (1986, 119-135), Ryan (1989b, 11-5), and Ghany (1996, 265-74, 300-4) for accounts.

left an unamicable split, revealing what Ryan (*TE* 20 October 1997, 10) described as "sociological" divisions in the PNM, between the PNM Women's League and the senior elements in control of the party groups, on the one hand, and the "reformists" and "old guard," on the other.

Meanwhile, in contrast to the UNC and the PNM, the NAR polled 13,167 less votes in the 1996 local government election than it did in 1992. NAR Leader ANR Robinson, Chairman Anthony Smart, and former NAR Minister Lincoln Myers accused the UNC of undermining the NAR in the elections. In August 1996 the party declared that as an organisation it was not part of the government, only its two MPs were (Ryan 1996, 377-80).

However, in November 1996 the UNC fulfilled item two of the 1995 UNC-NAR Heads of Agreement when the Constitution was amended to insert the THA Act, No. 40 of 1996. The Act was the product of a Joint Select Committee of Parliament, which had modified the original recommendations contained in Senate Paper No. 4 of 1996. On the grounds of maintaining the integrity of the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago, PNM committee members forced the removal of legislative authority for the THA, entrenchment of the Act in the constitution (thereby requiring a special majority for it to be amended), and the expansion of the Senate from thirty-one to thirty-seven members to allow senatorial appointment by majority and minority THA leaders. The final draft gave the THA authority over the administration of state lands, towns and country planning, customs and excise, housing, education and statistics. In future budgetary allocations to the THA, the Finance Minister was obliged to consider Tobago's special circumstances (physical separation by sea, isolation from national growth centres, and the impracticability of participation by residents of Tobago in the major educational,

cultural, and sporting facilities located in Trinidad) and a Dispute Resolution Commission was to be established to manage relations with the central government (GORTT 1996a; *CI* January 1997, 11; *TE* 28 February 2000).

On 9 December 1996, two weeks after the Act was passed, THA elections were held. A total of 15,034 votes were cast, the lowest amount ever.²⁸ Both the PNM and the NAR contested all twelve seats and independents contested three seats. Once again, the UNC did not participate, leaving it to its "partner in government." The NAR were able to secure ten seats and 60.1 percent of the vote, and the PNM kept its seat in Buccoo/Lambeau capturing 33.6 percent of the total votes cast. A surprise victory came from former NAR senator Deborah Moore-Miggins²⁹ who took away the Bethel/Patience Hill seat from the NAR, contesting as an independent. THA Chief Secretary Lennox Denoon, who was deselected by the NAR, was replaced by Hochoy Charles, chairman of the NAR's Tobago Steering Committee (GORTT [1997a]; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 42; *CI* December 1996, 11).

Political shifts climaxed in early 1997. Seventy-nine year old President Noor Hassanali was due to retire on the completion of his second term in office in February 1997. On 7 February the government nominated NAR Leader ANR Robinson for the presidency. Despite denials by both parties, this was widely regarded as the real deal made between the UNC and the NAR in 1995. The PNM objected to Robinson – a founding member and former Deputy Leader of the PNM, founder and leader of the DAC, leader of the NAR, and a former Prime Minister – being nominated as President, a post which

²⁸ *Caribbean Insight* (January 1997, 11) provides a slightly different rate of 41.6 percent out of 34,088 registered voters. The turnout rate it reported for 1992 was 56.9 percent.

obliges political neutrality. As an alternative, Manning, as the Leader of the Opposition, nominated Justice Anthony Lucky for the post, making the Presidential election³⁰ for the first time in its twenty-year history a contest between candidates.

On 12 February, two days before the election was due, Vincent Lasse (PNM MP for Point Fortin and former Minister of Housing, 1991-5), declared himself an independent, criticising in his resignation letter Manning's support for Point Fortin Mayor Francis Bertrand. In less than twenty-four hours Lasse was sworn in by President Hassanali as a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (*CI* March 1997, 4; *EIU* 1998a, 11). The UNC increased its parliamentary majority by one.

In the election of 14 February, the PNM suffered another embarrassing defeat. Of the sixty-four potential votes³¹ ANR Robinson had secured forty-six, and Lucky received only eighteen. One ballot was spoiled. Therefore, at least three PNM parliamentarians did not vote with the party – or more if any independent senators voted for Robinson³² (*CI* March 1997, 3-4).

More seriously for the parliamentary balance of power, on 28 February PNM MP for Arima Rupert Griffith, former Deputy Speaker of the House and a candidate on the Rowley slate, also declared himself an independent, describing the PNM as "drifting

²⁹ Moore-Miggins resigned on 6 November 1996 after abstaining on a proposal to reconvene the parliamentary select committee on the relationship between Tobago and Trinidad.

³⁰ The President is elected for a term of five years by an Electoral College composed of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament (Emmanuel 1993, 67).

³¹ The government's members in the lower house totalled eighteen (excluding Robinson and Lasse who did not vote), and in the senate totalled sixteen; the opposition had sixteen seats in the lower house and five in the upper (as a newly appointed senator had not yet been sworn in); and there were nine independent senators.

³² Panday claimed that two independent senators told him that they voted for Robinson.

rudderless because of a lack of leadership." Griffith was also promptly sworn in (by President Robinson) as a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister. With Lasse and Griffith on the government side, the UNC could count on nineteen seats, without the NAR's support.

Manning attempted to have the Arima and Point Fortin seats declared vacant under the Crossing of the Floor Act. On 7 March 1997 the Speaker, Hector McLean, rejected Manning's application, invoking the ruling in 1995 that the House could not recognise such requests as it had not adopted a standing order recognising political parties or their leaders³³ (McLean 1997; *CI* April 1997, 11). At the end of April 1997, Manning was forced to withdraw a High Court application seeking to appeal the Speaker's decision and was ordered to pay TT\$1.2 million dollars in legal costs incurred by the Speaker.³⁴ To raise money, the PNM launched a "Preservation of Democracy Fund," which by December 1997 had only reached TT\$255,000. In October 1997 Manning was forced to deny reports that prominent businessmen offered to pay off his debt in exchange for his resignation as PNM leader (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 161; *CI* June 1997; December 1997; *TE* 24 July 1999, 9; *TG* 7 May 1999).

The NAR, too, suffered further decline. Upon nomination for the Presidency, Robinson resigned both from his Tobago East seat and from party leadership. Former Speaker of

³³ Ironically, that ruling had been made in September 1995 by Deputy Speaker Rupert Griffith, rejecting a request from the Opposition Leader Panday to have Huslie Bhaggan's Chaguanas seat declared vacant (*CI* October 1995, 11). It is also worth recalling that the resignation from the PNM on 31 March 1978 of Hector McLean (MP for Arouca and Minister of Works, Transport and Communication) prompted the Williams government, with the cooperation of Opposition Leader Panday, to introduce the Crossing of the Floor Act later that year (Ghany 1996, 346-8).

³⁴ Not only had the Standing Orders not been amended as demanded by the 1978 legislation, Manning's referred to himself in his letter to the Speaker as Leader of the Opposition rather than Leader of the PNM, and "a person other than the Leader of the Opposition and belonging to the same party had

the House (1987-91) Nizam Mohammed was appointed as interim political leader. Choosing a candidate for the Tobago East by-elections was contentious, however. Dr. Morgan Job – a controversial media personality known for his outspoken, perhaps “right-wing individualist” views³⁵ – had been selected by the NAR’s Tobago Steering Committee and sanctioned by the national party to contest the seat. Pamela Nicholson (deputy chair of the Tobago Steering Committee) objected to Job’s candidacy and to Hochoy Charles’s dismissal of her advice. On 14 April Nicholson resigned from the NAR and declared herself an independent, still keeping her ministry in government. For three weeks the NAR had no representatives in Parliament, yet the new leader Nizam Mohammed declared that he did not view Nicholson’s departure as a “major upheaval” (*TE* 17 April 1997, 1). Nicholson and THA independent Deborah Moore-Miggins declared their support for the NAR’s rejected candidate, Winford James, who contested the seat as an independent. Panday remained neutral and offered a cabinet post to either James or Job, if either won.

The by-election was held on 5 May, with Job securing 4,117 votes; the PNM’s³⁶ Hilson Phillips 1,184; and Winford James 860.³⁷ THA Chief Secretary Hochoy Charles consulted with the Prime Minister and on 22 May instructed Job to contact Panday about a cabinet post. Job was eventually sworn in by President Robinson as Minister of Tobago Affairs. Mohammed, however, declared that Job’s swearing in was not authorised by the party and that Job was there on his own (Siewah and Arjoonsingh

communicated with the Speaker styling himself ‘Leader of the Opposition (Party) in the House’” (McLean 1997, 305).

³⁵ See his *Think Again: Essays on Race and Political Economy* (1991) for his outspoken opinions.

³⁶ On 21 February 1997, one week after Robinson was elected President, Tobago PNM treasurer Trevor Craig was reported to have likened Manning to an albatross around the PNM’s neck (*CI* March 1997, 4).

1998, vol. 2, 165; *CI* May 1997; June 1997; February 1999; *TG* 28 December 1997; *TE* 15 August 1997, 14). By May 1997, then, the government side of the Lower House was composed of seventeen UNC members, three independents, and one member authorised by the Tobago Steering Committee of the NAR. The opposition side was reduced to fifteen members.³⁸

Law and Order, 1997-9

While parliamentary allegiance shifted, the UNC government continued its attempts to implement its agenda of law and order, "equality" for "all the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago," and results-oriented social and economic development. These were aimed at making the country realise its "great potential" and achieve "a secure place in the twenty-first century," which had been designated as "the critical national goal" by Panday in his 1997 Independence Day speech (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 138-45). However, it seemed that what the government saw as law and order, others construed as a sustained "attack" on "fundamental freedoms"; what the government construed as "inclusiveness" was suspected by others to be "racialism"; and when the government focused on results in its social and economic programme, opponents pointed to lack of transparency, corruption, nepotism, authoritarianism, and bellicosity.³⁹

³⁷ In 1995, the NAR received 5,254 votes and the PNM 2,432 (LaGuerre 1997a, app.).

³⁸ Further reducing the PNM number in parliament was the effective withdrawal of PNM MP for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, Gordon Draper, after he became a consultant with the Commonwealth Secretariat in London. Draper's absence was similar to Dr. Capildeo's in 1963-8.

³⁹ Ryan (1999b, 244-6) provides a three-page list of specific grievances against the UNC government, with varying levels of legitimacy.

As part of its law and order platform, the government introduced a number of well-publicised programmes to assist the police with fighting crime. By July 1999 1,490 new police officers were recruited; eleven new police stations were built, ten were reconstructed, and three were refurbished; by the end of 1996, 154 vehicles were distributed to police stations throughout the country;⁴⁰ an E999 rapid response system was introduced, at a cost of TT\$55 million; in December 1997 a "zero tolerance" Law Enforcement Action Plan had been established, combining the military and police forces;⁴¹ a community policing programme (conceptualised in 1991) was established in 1996 to involve police officers in community programmes, with the aim of solving problems before they escalated into criminal activity and to build trust between the public and the police; and in May 1999 a Crime Stoppers programme was introduced, rewarding citizens for information leading to arrests (GORTT 1996b, 38-9; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 37, 200, 311-3; *CI* October 1997, 11; *TE* 10 July 1999, 26; *TG* 30 July 1999, 15).

The government also instituted measures to clean up the police service, including the establishment in May 1996 of the Police Complaints Authority and prosecuting a

⁴⁰ On 6 November 1997 the Prime Minister, the Attorney-General, the National Security Minister, and the head of the civil service met with Manning, who had requested a meeting with Panday to discuss the establishment of an independent inquiry into the contract for the purchase of police jeeps, and other allegations of corruption. One hundred Chrysler Cherokee jeeps at a cost of TT\$16 million were provided to the police service by the recently formed Platinum Motors, whose director Ishwar Galbaransingh (a former financier of the PNM) was also recently appointed chairman of TIDCO. Manning walked out of the meeting, however, saying that he believed it was a "trap," since he had wanted to meet with Panday alone. One week earlier Manning had told a public meeting that the government was "looking for an opportunity to lock ... [him] up." The government appointed former High Court judge, Justice Jim Davis, to make an official enquiry, which did not substantiate Manning's allegations (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 311; *CI* December 1996, 4).

⁴¹ In the first half of 1998 over 2,300 exercises and 5,200 raids were carried out on drug blocks (GORTT 1998c, 26-7). In May 1998 alone, 1,046 persons had been detained for narcotic offences, 1,047 on outstanding warrants, and 48 persons for firearms and ammunition offences (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 312-3).

number of corrupt police officers (GORTT 1996b, 38-9).⁴² A Commission of Inquiry into the operation of Justices of the Peace, whose report was tabled in October 1997, led to 436 charges being brought by April 1999 against ten justices of the peace,⁴³ nineteen bailors, three attorneys-at-law, four police officers, and six others in connection with corrupt bail transactions. A Task Force was established in October 1997 to act on a report that drug dealers and other criminal had been paying employees of the Registrar General's department to falsify and duplicate official certificates and documents, and on 21 February 2000 the Special Investigations Unit began probing for corruption in the Red House (*CI* November 1997, 11; 23 April 1999; GORTT 1999c, 15; *TG* 22 February 2000).

The Panday administration also entered into several bilateral and multilateral agreements to help its fight against crime, including the Extradition Treaty,⁴⁴ Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Agreement, and Maritime Counter Drug Operations Agreement⁴⁵ signed with the US in 1996; the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty signed with Canada in 1997; and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Agreement with Great Britain in 1998. A Counter-Narcotics Task Force had

⁴² This included the charging of officers for the 1994 murder of Canadian visitors (*TG* 26 September 1998), and of others for crimes such as theft, conspiracy to kidnap, and rape (*TE* 3 July 1999, 5, 7). On 27 July 1999 independent Senator Diana Mahabir Wyatt lauded that "something finally is being done" to purge the police of its "dissident" officers (*TG* 29 July 1999, 12).

⁴³ The total number of justices of the peace was 120 at the time.

⁴⁴ Up to 1998, two traffickers had been extradited to the US and three cases were pending (GORTT 1998b, 12; *CI* February 1998, 11).

⁴⁵ This agreement was popularly known as the "shiprider agreement" because it allowed qualified officers of either country to board vessels authorised by the other country to carry out drug interdiction operations. Prime Minister Owen Arthur of Barbados created a controversy in Trinidad and Tobago from February to May 1997 by criticising the 1996 agreement as "imperialistic," gathering the support of UWI academics, trade unions, NGOs, the PNM, and sections of the press. However, by 10 May 1997 Barbados and Jamaica signed similar agreements, just before meeting with President Clinton at the first CARICOM-US Summit (*TG* 18 February 1997; 4 May 1997; 9 May 1997; 16 May 1997; 18 May 1997; *TE* 3 November 1996; 19 February 1997; 15 May 1997; 17 May 1997; 21 May 1997; 30 May

also been established with the assistance of the United States and Great Britain. In particular, cooperation with the US in counter-drugs operation increased dramatically under the UNC government. The US government was reported to have donated four specialised counter narcotics vessels in 1996, and in 1998 two eighty-two foot cutters and four aircraft. Also in 1998, outgoing US Ambassador Brian Donnelly signed a Letter of Agreement committing US\$500,000 – ten times the amount allocated to Trinidad and Tobago in 1996 – to assist in counter-narcotics activity (GORTT 1996b, 39; GORTT 1998, 27; GORTT 1998b, 2, 11-2).

The Panday administration's emphasis on law and order was not only focused on crime prevention. It increasingly viewed "the maintenance of a law-abiding, orderly society as critical to the success of its policy objectives" in general (GORTT 1998c, 26; Panday 1999). In a speech on 12 September 1996 to party activists, Panday began his frequent assertions that the discipline, order, and respect for law created in Singapore had moved that society "from chaos into prosperity," whereas Trinidad and Tobago's "propensity for lawlessness" and "rumour mongering" prevented such effective action (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 30-41, 184, 314-5, 325-6, 331; Panday 1999). The commitment to the centrality of law and order was seen in the government's 1998-9 budget, titled "A Platform for Progress: Security For All," which had allocated to the Ministry of National Security TT\$1,107 million, the second largest allocation to any Ministry or Department (Kuei Tung 1998, 4).⁴⁶

1997; *Newsday* 6 March 1997, 5; *CI* June 1997, 1, 12; *TTR Independence Day* 1997, 7-11; Ferguson 1997; Parris 1997; GORTT 1998b, 4).

⁴⁶ According to the *Estimates of Expenditure* for 1998-9, the Ministry of Education received the largest allocation, and the Ministries of Finance and Health received the third and fourth largest, respectively.

In this context should be seen such legislation as the amendment of the Summary Offences Act, requiring longer notice given to police before a demonstration and increasing the penalty for violation from a maximum of one-year imprisonment to two years and from a TT\$2,000 fine to TT\$10,000 (*TG* 2 August 1988, 8); the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill, passed on 22 June 1999, which had provoked two weeks of debate finally resulting in an amendment to Clause 23 which opposition and independent senators feared gave too much power to the police, who were empowered to enter without a warrant premises where they had reason to believe that domestic violence was taking place (*TG* 23 June 1999, 3); and requests by the Attorney-General to introduce the death penalty for rape and for drug trafficking, rejected in August 1999 by the Law Commission (*TE* 4 August 1999, 5).

The government's determination to uphold law and order could be seen in its strong stand against the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen, when the government erected a fence delineating the boundary between the state's and the Jamaat's holdings.⁴⁷ Threats and displays of battle-readiness by Muslimeen spokesmen were met by Minister Joseph Theodore's strong words and decisive action, prompting at least two nationwide broadcasts by the Minister that week (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, app., 53; *TE* 15 March 1998).

The administration's resolve was perhaps nowhere better demonstrated than in the hanging of Dole Chadee and eight other men on 4, 5, and 7 June 1999. Laws were

⁴⁷ After their previous attorney Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj had become Attorney-General, the Jamaat secured the representation of Subhas Panday, brother of the prime minister. In September 1996, the Muslimeen were ordered to pay the state TT\$60 million in damages, and on 11 March 1997 they lost an appeal against a 1992 ruling that the organisation had no access to State land adjoining their mosque in

passed to introduce alternate jurors and the acceptance of evidence from dead witnesses; in July 1996, after a lack of success due to jurors being rejected by the defence or seeking exemption from duty,⁴⁸ it was reported that persons in the vicinity of the court – a recreational and swimming area – were summoned to jury duty (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 42). On 3 September 1996 all nine men were sentenced to death. The US Drug Enforcement Agency described the conviction as a "major achievement," identifying the group as "primarily responsible for the majority of cocaine coming through Trinidad and the Eastern Caribbean" (*CI* September 1996; October 1996). On 29 May 1998 the government announced Trinidad and Tobago's withdrawal from the optional protocol to the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (effective 27 August 1998) and from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (effective 27 May 1999), as those bodies did not guarantee that petitions from murder convicts under sentence of death would be fully considered within eighteen months⁴⁹ (*CI* July 1998, 12). The UNC had held regular public meetings since 27 May 1998 shoring up popular support for a constitutional amendment that it had planned to introduce to prevent prisoners under sentence of death from filing constitutional motions after their death warrants were read.⁵⁰ On 21 September 1998, the bill was defeated by a vote of twenty-one to thirteen.⁵¹ On 23 September Panday called a special meeting of the PNM's members of parliament; however, no statement

Mucurapo. In February 1998, the City Corporation issued a lease to the Jamaat to regularise the situation (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 53; *CI* October 1996, 11).

⁴⁸ As of 28 June 1996, out of the 156 jurors originally empanelled, 75 sought exemption, of whom 31 were released from the pool (*CI* July 1996, 4).

⁴⁹ The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council ruled in the case of Pratt and Morgan in November 1993 that the death penalty could not be executed after five years had elapsed, on the grounds that such delay constituted cruel and unusual punishment.

⁵⁰ The UNC opposed a similar measure introduced by the PNM government in April 1995 (*CI* May 1995, 11).

⁵¹ A three-quarters majority (i.e., twenty-seven votes) was required.

was issued after the meeting (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 333, 347; *CI* October 1998, 10; *TE* 6 September 1998, 5). One week after the withdrawal from the Inter-American Commission took effect, the nine men were hanged in batches of three over the course of three days.⁵² On 4 June 1999, the first day of the hanging, Panday announced that the local government elections would be held on 12 July 1999.

The effect of the government's action on crime cannot be assessed statistically, since during the period of research statistics for 1997-9 were not yet fully compiled. The evidence available does show that some sort of reduction had occurred. In 1996 total reports to the police other than traffic offences hit a nine-year low of 60,126, but rose in 1997 to 62,269. In 1996, there were 123 homicides, down from the all-time high in 1994 of 146 (*ASD* 1997).⁵³ It had been reported in *Caribbean Insight* (17 September 1999, 1) that in 1998, cocaine seizures in Trinidad and Tobago increased by more than 60 percent over 1997 and that 1,388 people were charged with cocaine trafficking or possession, more than three times the number in 1997.

Related to this plank of their programme was the government's battle with the media, particularly CCN, centred around the issue of "freedom of expression" and "democracy," which grew increasingly hostile over the period. In May 1997 the government published a Green Paper on the reform of media law, to open discussion on the need to update and balance in the contemporary communications environment the

⁵² After the nine were hanged, the government announced that it would assist the two children who survived the 1994 murders (the younger one was thirteen at the time) by rebuilding the family house, finding a job for one, supplying the other with school books and uniform grants, supplying household appliances, granting legal ownership of their father's property, and providing them each with public assistance of TT\$171 per month (*TG* 13 June 1999, 1). This action presaged the Criminal Injuries Compensation Bill passed one month later, on 19 July 1999 (*TE* 20 July 1999, 5).

⁵³ In 1996, the annual suicide rate went down to 146 from a high of 185 in 1995 (*ASD* 1997).

responsibilities and rights of the public, government, and the media (GORTT 1997d). The paper brought immediate criticism from Ken Gordon who, in an address to the Publishers and Broadcasters Association, described the paper as "deviously framed and offensive," and called for the "widest possible campaign" against it. In particular, Gordon objected to the suggestion in section 8.10 (2) in the proposed code of ethics that "journalists and newspapers shall endeavour to highlight and promote activities of the State and the public which aim at national unity and solidarity, integrity of Trinidad and Tobago, and economic and social progress" (GORTT 1997d, 26).

At an Indian Arrival Day celebration in Chaguanas on 29 May 1997, Panday responded to Gordon by calling him a "pseudo-racist," who used racism to promote his own interest, unlike a genuine racist who at least promoted his or her race.⁵⁴ On 2 June Gordon resigned from the chairmanship of BWIA and from the Prime Minister's National Beautification Awards Committee, and instructed his legal advisers to take "appropriate action" against Panday. Panday was unapologetic. Panday dismissed the well-publicised resignation and replaced Gordon with CEO of CL Financial, Lawrence Duprey, a close associate (*CI* July 1997, 4). Speaking at the El Dorado Shiv Mandir on 8 June 1997, Panday famously declared,

Every time I speak without a prepared script I seem to say something that unsettles somebody. ... I wish to assure you that no one will attack my government and remain unscathed (*applause*). The struggle has been too long and it has been too hard not only for me but for too many of you. ... You must not delude yourself into believing that the fact that we are in government that change has come. (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 122)

In a hostile interview with the *Guardian* on 16 November 1997, Panday declared,

... The media's disposition to view and to represent me and my Government through the prism of race has been at the core of my disagreements with the media. There has as well, been political bias in certain areas of the media. I have never been afraid to call a spade a bloody shovel when I thought it to be warranted.

[Responding to a question about his allegedly "quite unstatesmanlike" statements:] ... I will say no more other than that I give you no promise that I will ever be disposed to take unfair and biased attacks on me and members of my government with the statesmanlike silence of a bobolee.⁵⁵

In any event I think the country wants an effective Prime Minister, not an imperial ruler and not a self-styled Father of the Nation. (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 154-6)

The green paper did not result in any legislation being passed, and in November-December 1997 peace was made. However, in 1998 the fight started again through a number of events. On 30 April 1998 the government refused a sixth renewal of the work permit (granted in 1993) of Barbadian journalist Julian Rogers, host of TV6's *Morning Edition*, on the grounds that CCN had not complied with the condition that an understudy for Rogers be trained (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 192; *CI* May 1998, 11; *TE* 13 May 1998). Some regional pressure was placed on the Trinidad and Tobago government over the issue. Barbadian Prime Minister Owen Arthur claimed that while he and Panday were in Chile together he had reminded the Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister that the expulsion of Rogers had contravened the CARICOM agreement on the free movement of skilled workers. Panday denied such a conversation ever took place and also noted that the agreement had not yet been made law in Trinidad and Tobago (*TE* 8 May 1998). At the Nineteenth CARICOM Summit in St.

⁵⁴ The term was first used by Panday, when he was Leader of the Opposition, to describe then Speaker of the House Occah Seapaul (Ryan 1999b, 231).

⁵⁵ A "bobolee" is an effigy traditionally beaten on Good Friday, serving a symbolic function similar to the so-called "scapegoat" in Yom Kippur.

Lucia in July 1998, the matter was raised again, and Panday responded "I am not afraid of the media. ... They didn't put us in power, we are here despite them, they're not as powerful as they think they are" (*TG* 5 July 1998, 2). Rogers remained in Barbados.

On 28 May 1988 (two days before Indian Arrival Day) the *Express* ran a red-ink headline, "RACISM AT PIARCO," basing its lead story on unsubstantiated PSA allegations of "rampant racism and victimisation" practised by the state-controlled Airports Authority at Piarco Airport against Africans. The *Guardian* on the following day published the fact that 85 percent of the Airport Authority's workforce was of African descent, according to the Airports Authority Human Resource Manager, Calvin Bess. Led by the Prime Minister, a controversy over the professionalism and political bias of the daily press followed. After taking leave of absence, *Express* editor Lennox Grant (editor of the *Trinidad and Tobago Review* in the late 1980s) resigned from his post on 10 August 1998 to join the *Trinidad Guardian* as its new Editor-in-Chief⁵⁶ (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 192-3, 264).

Matters were further ignited three months later when the *Express*, TV6, and the PNM alleged that the Prime Minister had arranged the "mother of all sweetheart deals" for Namcaran Singh (Narine Singh), chairman of the UNC New York Party Group, and a friend of the Prime Minister for twenty years, in an agreement with a United States company, InnCogen, to build a US\$100 million electricity generating plant in central Trinidad (*TE* 3 November 1998). On 8 November, at a rally celebrating the third anniversary of the UNC government, Panday accused the media houses of "wanting to

⁵⁶ Owen Baptiste had resigned from the *Guardian* on 30 June 1997, and was replaced by Carl Jacobs (*CI* July 1997, 4).

exercise political power without fighting elections." He accused sections of the press of racism and being politically tied to the PNM, drug dealers, and insurrectionists. Panday declared, "We must treat them as political opponents who are out to destroy us. If we do not, they will destroy us. We must do them first." Some journalists covering the rally were jostled by UNC members, while others reportedly had beer thrown over them (*CI* December 1998, 1, 8). Following the events, the UNC criticised its supporters' behaviour and denied that the prime minister's speech was intended to cause violence. On 20 November MATT organised a broadly anti-government march for "Democracy, Human Rights and a Free Press" in Port of Spain.⁵⁷ The rally, which concluded at Woodford Square at 1:15 p.m., fifteen minutes before Parliament's afternoon sitting, attracted support from the Opposition PNM, the NAR, NGOs, religious activists, cultural activists, the PSA, the National Union of Government and Federated Workers (NUGFW), the OWTU, the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA), political commentators, and "blind persons" (*TG* 21 November 1998; *TE* 21 November 1998).

"All the Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago": Inclusiveness or Indian Hegemony? 1997-9

In his 1997 Independence Day speech, Panday reiterated his conviction that "the greatest guarantee [against ethnic division] will come if we celebrate our diversity and make it our strength, instead of trying to deny it, as some would have us do" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 142). However, efforts made by the UNC government to

⁵⁷ Selwyn Ryan marshalled comments from Jamaica's *Gleaner*, *Observer*, and *Herald* that were extremely critical of Panday ("outlandish" and "unacceptable," "you [Panday] can't threaten us and get away with it," "the Jamaica press would eat Mr. Panday raw") (*TE* 6 December 1998).

do so were often greeted with hostility by those who suspected that such moves, though apparently promoting equality, were designed to covertly usher in Indian hegemony and/or undermine Afro-Trinidadians.

In 1997 the government granted thirty acres of land at Orange Grove Estate in Maloney, eastern Trinidad, for the establishment of a spiritual centre for African religions which would house a cathedral, a library, a building for counselling services and the training of ministers, and a trade school for children living in depressed areas.⁵⁸ On Baptist Liberation Day 1998 Panday was proclaimed an honorary Baptist and he declared, "Fellow Shouter Baptists, I must be the luckiest man in the world: I was born in the home of a Hindu, I went to a Christian college, I got married to a Muslim woman, and today I have been consecrated into the Baptist Shouter Faith" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 361). On 30 July 1999 the government passed the Orisa marriage bill (introduced on 2 July), noting that no other country in the world recognised such marriages, and that this was clear discrimination "paradoxically" perpetrated by the PNM government (*TE* 31 July 1999, 5; *TE* 4 July 1999, 6).

Prominent African and Afro-American personalities were invited to Trinidad and Tobago during this time, including Reverend Jesse Jackson (who gave the feature address on 15 July 1997 at CLICO's⁵⁹ Workers Convention); Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlins, President of the Republic of Ghana (as the feature speaker on 5 August 1997 at Emancipation celebrations); Erica Williams-Connell (who opened the Eric Williams Collection at the UWI on 22 March 1998); Retired US General Colin Powell (who was

⁵⁸ The land grant effectively ended the two-year dispute within the Baptist community, dividing them into pro-PNM and pro-UNC factions, over whether a national holiday or a grant of land was more important (*Mirror* 28 January 1996, 9; Ryan 1996, 356-7).

the Keynote Speaker at CL Financial management conference on 23 March 1998); and Winnifred Madikizela Mandela (invited by the ESC on a three-day visit in June 1998 to launch Emancipation celebrations). They were each formally received in the offices of the Prime Minister, who spoke alongside each of them at their feature addresses, with the exception of Mandela (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1 55-6; vol. 2, 124, 131-7, 274, 285, 351; *CI* August 1997, 11). Introducing President Rawlins, the first Ghanain head of state to visit Trinidad and Tobago,⁶⁰ Panday was booed after he repeated his assertion that despite his efforts to create "a unified prosperous society in which each individual knows he or she has a stake" he continued "to face opposition from those who seek personal gains from divisiveness in the society" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 131-7).

On 4 August 1998 Panday formally commissioned the Chief Olukun Igbaro African Library of Trinidad and Tobago (named after President Robinson's chiefly title). In October 1998 the government established a three-member committee – headed by ESC chairman Khafra Kambon, with Anglican Pastor Clive Griffith (Kwame Mohlabani) and historian Michael Anthony as its two other members – to examine the proposal, announced by Panday on 1 August 1998, that King George V Park (in the old middle-class Port of Spain suburb of St. Clair) be renamed "Emancipation Park" and a monument to honour African slaves be built there (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 361; vol. 2, 136; *TE* 2 August 1998, 3). The proposal, however, was withdrawn on 23 July 1999 as the St. Clair Residents' Association, with the support of the PNM, Port of

⁵⁹ CLICO (Caribbean Life Insurance Company) is the flagship company of CL Financial.

⁶⁰ CLR James had been somewhat of a tutor to Kwame Nkrumah in the US from 1943-5, and Trinidad-born George Padmore, head of the International African Bureau in London, became a member of the Cabinet of Ghana in the immediate post-independence period. Padmore's ashes are buried in the Castle, Ghana's seat of government (Buhle 1988, 136-42; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 135).

Spain Mayor John Rahael, and the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, threatened legal action against the government over the issue⁶¹ (TG 3 June 1999; 19 July 1999; 24 July 1999; 27 July 1999; 29 July 1999).

On 13 January 1997 the Indian High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago presented Prime Minister Panday with the keys to the temporary headquarters for the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Cultural Co-operation, the cultural centre that became one of the problems identified in the NAR's 1988 Nanga Report (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 56). On 8 February 1998 Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee paid a visit to Trinidad (the first since Indira Gandhi's visit in 1968) and officially opened the permanent two hectare (five acre) site at Mount Hope (TE 9 February 1999).

On 26 January 1997 Prime Minister Panday was the chief guest at the Government of India's Fiftieth Republic Day celebrations. The invitation to Panday was extended by India's President Shankar Dayal Sharma who had been an official guest of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the 150th Anniversary of Indian Arrival on 30 May 1995. Panday left for India with a contingent of ninety-eight businesspersons, cultural artists, press officers, and officials. A highlight of the trip was his emotional

⁶¹ The City of Port of Spain held the park's 199-year lease "for a public walk, recreation ground or public park ... and for no other purpose whatsoever" granted in 1935 (the year marking the silver jubilee of the crowning of King George V). In addition, the Ordinance for Park and Recreation Grounds forbade the building of permanent structures in any of the nation's parks. There were at least three other instances, in 1973 and 1986, when the government was prevented from building in the park a sporting or recreation complex.

Interestingly, in May-June 1998 the PNM also supported the middle-class Diego Martin residents who opposed changing the name of "Diamond Boulevard" to "Wendy Fitzwilliam Boulevard" in honour of Miss Trinidad and Tobago's winning the 1998 Miss Universe title. Two days after the sign was erected it was blacked out with paint, bringing comment from Winnie Mandela who had been visiting Trinidad and Tobago at the time and hailed Fitzwilliam as an example of African beauty. Despite opposition, the government kept the new name (*Independent* 19 June 1998, 11; Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 55-6).

first-time visit to Lakshmanpur, the village where his great-grandfather had originated (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 93).

Following Dharmacharaya Krishna Persad's rejection of the 1995 Trinity Cross, in October 1998 the National Awards Committee headed by Chief Justice Michael de la Bastide recommended that the name "Trinity Cross" be changed to the "Order of Trinidad and Tobago" since the Cross "was seen as a Christian symbol" and Trinidad and Tobago was a multi-religious society⁶² (TE 15 October 1998). Around the same time, a Scholarships Review Committee was reportedly established to investigate perceived injustices in the selection process (TE 16 October 1998).

Panday and the Indian community didn't have an entirely smooth relationship, however. The SDMS, the largest Hindu group in the country, clashed with the Panday administration on a few occasions. In 1997 it complained about the allocations to Emancipation Day activities (which officially amounted to TT\$416,000 in 1996) relative to funding for its own activities (which the SDMS claimed was TT\$100,000) (TG 24 May 1997, 7); in a series of newspaper columns in the *Express* it articulated opposition to the government's commitment to abolish the eleven-plus Common Entrance exam, arguing that academic excellence would be needlessly sacrificed for egalitarian ideology and that more administrative chaos and corruption would be introduced in the new continuous assessment programme (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 275; TE 16 April 1998; 7 May 1998; 14 May 1998); and during Indian Arrival Day celebrations in 1999, the SDMS claimed that it would file a \$2 billion

⁶² According to the 1990 census, 29.6 percent of the population were either Hindu or Muslim. If one added the categories "None," "Other," and "Not Stated," the proportion of non-Christians would be 39.6 percent (ASD 1997).

class-action suit against the state for "restitution" of the value of the land that the State reclaimed from Hindus before 1945 when Hindu marriages (and therefore inheritance) were not recognised. They noted, however, that they would wait until the Attorney-General Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj demitted office so that they could secure his "unparalleled legal expertise." When asked about the statements, Prime Minister Panday responded, "Am I expected to reply to every foolish statement made in this country?" (TG 3 June 1999, 6).

In a more direct challenge to Williams's nationalism, in June 1998 the Panday administration announced that it would establish a committee to review the 1960 Concordat between the Church and State (*Independent* 27 June 1998, 14; TG 5 July 1998, 6). In an interview on 20 September 1998, Panday remarked,

I believe the Concordat was a mistake by Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams, though he may have imposed it with good intentions. ... He wrongly thought he could promote unity by destroying diversity and creating a monolithic society. But by removing the moralising influence of religion from the educational system, he created the generation of amoral youths which is today attacking the society with a viciousness hitherto unknown. He, probably innocently, sowed the wind. Today we are reaping the whirlwind of that miscalculation. (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 353)

In keeping with older Creole idea of "Trinidad and Tobago culture," however, the government established the country's first National Steel Orchestra, launched on Independence Day 1998, with thirty members being paid a monthly salary of TT\$2,500. It also pledged to establish a Carnival Institute (GORTT 1998c, 41; TE 9 February 1998; TG 26 September 1998).

On 13 March 1998, Panday tabled the Equal Opportunities Bill, which he had advocated since 1990 during the Hyatali Constitutional Reform Committee.⁶³ The bill proposed to outlaw discrimination on the basis of gender, race (including mixed race), religion, political affiliation, origin (including geographical origin), and disability in the fields of employment, education, accommodation, and the provision of goods and services. The bill – in particular, Section 7:1 which sought to “prohibit offensive behaviour in public which offends or insults another person or group ... [or incites] racial and religious hatred” – was largely condemned in the press, who suspected, as Selwyn Ryan put it in the *Express* of 22 May 1998, that it was “a Trojan horse to silence certain calypsonians, and that one of its unintended consequences would be to kill the traditional calypso as an artform” (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 263-73).

Despite the UNC’s gestures, ethnic grievances and suspicions seemed to be more prominent, even if only in the short run, or apparently. Calypsonians Cro Cro in 1996 (“All Yuh Look For Dat”) and Mystic Prowler 1998 (“A Vision of T&T in 2010”) won the Calypso Monarch titles singing songs that were plainly hostile to the idea of Trinidad and Tobago being led by Indians.⁶⁴ Small African-oriented organisations had sprung up, including one led by Arthur Sanderson (former MP for Fyzabad and junior minister in the NAR administration dismissed from his post for allegedly slapping his secretary), who proclaimed, “Thank God UNC win, because African people eyes now open” (*TE* 21 June 1998), and the National Association for the Empowerment of

⁶³ A Minority Report submitted by UWI political scientist John LaGuerre, one of the commissioners, recommended an Equal Opportunities Commission based on race and gender. On 9 February 1991 the UNC had established such a commission, of symbolic value at most, in the Office of the Leader of the Opposition (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 263-4).

African People, formed in March 1998 by Trinidad-born Selwyn Cudjoe, Professor of Africana Studies, Wellesley College, Massachusetts, USA (NAEAP 1998). The *Express* became a prominent forum for the almost weekly broadcast and elaboration of ethnic grievances, notably, but not exclusively, by its columnists Selwyn Cudjoe and Theodore Lewis, on one side, and Kamal Persad, Anil Mahabir, the Maha Sabha, and Rajne Ramlakhan, on another.⁶⁵

The almost constant running feud between Tobago and Trinidad had quite a different character from the Trinidadian ethnic questions of recognition and self-esteem, as it more directly involved decentralisation, administration, and parliamentary politics. On 22 September 1998, independent cabinet member Pamela Nicholson voted against an amendment to the contentious Squatter Regularisation bill.⁶⁶ After the vote, Panday had informed Nicholson that her position was "untenable" and that he could not tolerate violation of the principle of Cabinet responsibility. On 23 September 1998 Nicholson held a press conference to announce her resignation from government. She did not join the PNM, but her action increased the number of opposition members to sixteen, and reduced the government side to twenty (*CI* October 1998; November 1998; *TE* 24 September 1988; 25 September 1998; *TG* 25 September 1998).

Nicholson's resignation came against the background of constant bickering between the THA and the central government, mostly regarding control over the raising, allocation,

⁶⁴ Full transcripts of the lyrics can be found in *Caribbean Dialogue* (October/December 1997, 120-1) and Ryan (1996, 523-4).

⁶⁵ Ryan's *The Jhandi and the Cross: the Clash of Cultures in Post-Creole Trinidad and Tobago* (1999) lists in depth many of the opposing ethnic views expressed in the contemporary climate.

⁶⁶ The bill was originally passed in the Lower House on 17 April 1998, and had provoked protest from Morgan Job and Hochoy Charles over conflicts in THA/Central Government jurisdiction and

and spending of funds. In 1997 and 1998, Hochoy Charles used numerous opportunities to express his dissatisfaction with the THA's budgetary allocations from the central government⁶⁷ and pressed for a measure of financial independence (*TG* 27 December 1997). On the other hand, bolstered by the claims of the THA opposition (which had by 1998 comprised PNM minority leader, William McKenzie, independent assemblyman, Moore-Miggins, and two former NAR assemblymen who had declared themselves independents, Beverley Ramsey-Moore and Richard Alfred), the central government queried the THA's use of funds allocated to it. In October 1998 THA funding for the 1998-9 fiscal year⁶⁸ was withheld by the Minister of Finance, as the Disputes Resolution Commission considered a matter concerning the supply of details of Tobago's 1997 expenditure (*CI* November 1998, 10). On 12-3 June 1999 Charles met with the Attorney-General Maharaj and the Ministers of Finance and of Tobago Affairs, Kuei Tung and Job, to discuss measures that included amendments to empower the THA to borrow up to TT\$1 billion, to collect revenue payable in Tobago, and to guarantee the THA a minimum share of the recurrent development budget of Trinidad and Tobago (*TE* 18 June 1999, 11). Charles emerged from the meeting criticising the "non-performance" of Minister of Finance (*TG* 14 June 1999, 1) and on 17 June presented the THA budget commenting determinedly that "after this budget, Tobago is finished with that kind of mendicancy budgeting forever" (*TG* 22 June 1999, 3; *TE* 23 June 1999). Subsequently, Charles met with Chief Justice Michael de la Bastide, Patrick Manning, Nizam Mohammed, and addressed a retreat of the CARICOM Heads of Government in Tobago on 6 July 1999, criticising the relationship between Tobago

the different implications of squatter regularisation in agricultural Tobago and in urban Trinidad (*TE* 20 April 1998; 23 April 1998; *TG* 20 April 1998).

⁶⁷ For example, for the 1998 fiscal year, Charles requested TT\$1 billion, but was allocated TT\$300 million (*TE* 5 February 1998).

and Trinidad in the presence of Panday, the new CARICOM chairman (*TE* 18 June 1999, 11; *TG* 7 July 1999; 11 July 1999). At a news conference on 9 July 1999 Charles called on the "people of Trinidad not to vote for the party in power when they go to the polls to vote in the 1999 Local Government election [on 12 July]." The *Guardian* led the following day's paper with the red-ink headline, "Don't vote UNC." Morgan Job, however, stood with the government and was later criticised by Charles at the 30 April 2000 NAR Conference (*TG* 10 July 1999, 1; *TE* 1 May 2000).

"A Government That Delivers": The Development Programme, 1997-9

Perhaps above all else, the Panday administration prided itself on its measurable and visible achievements, which had achieved a good measure of international recognition from the IMF (*TG* 7 February 2000), the *New York Times* on 4 September 1998 (in Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 347), the *ACP-EU Courier* (May/June 1998, 9-27), *BusinessWeek* (10 August 1998), the *Washington Times* (26 May 1999), *Site Selection* magazine (July 1999), the *Oil and Gas Journal*, *Revista Latinoamericana* in January 1997 (in Maingot 1998, 24), and the 1999 UN Human Development Report (*TE* 24 July 1999, 10). During the local government elections Panday more aggressively restated his claim, "Any jackass can promise anything. We have come this time to change the politics of Trinidad and Tobago. We say no manifesto. We ent come to promise. We come tell you how much we have delivered. We ask you to judge us by what we do. Talk is cheap. Manifesto is cheap. Promise is cheap. Judge us by what we have done" (*TE* 11 July 1999, 7). However, against the government's zeal to deliver

⁶⁸ In 1998, the fiscal year had changed from January-December to October-September.

came seemingly unending allegations by the press, the PNM, activists, commentators, NGOs, and community groups of a lack of transparency, corruption (racial and partisan), authoritarianism, and bellicosity.

Undoubtedly, the economic indicators during the UNC's period of government have been strongly positive, almost in entirety (see Table 8-3).

Table 8-3. Selected Economic Indicators, 1992-5

	1996	1997	1998	1999p
GDP growth at constant 1985 prices	3.8%	3.1%	4.4%	6.9%
Real GDP growth Petroleum sector	2.0%	-1.3%	3.1%	n.a.
Real GDP growth Non-Petroleum sector	4.2%	4.9%	6.0%	n.a.
Crude Oil Prices (US\$/barrel; WTI)^a	\$22.16	\$20.61	\$14.37	\$19.31
Crude Oil Production (millions of barrels per day)	128.9	123.8	123.0	n.a.
Total Revenue (TT\$ million)	\$9,542.5	\$9,953.7	\$7,515.0 ^a	\$9,740.3
Current Oil Revenue (% of Total Revenue)	32.1%	20.8%	19.2%	17.5%
Total Expenditure (TT\$ million)	\$9,700.9	\$9,912.4	\$7,646.2	\$10,532.0
Total Expenditure (as % of GDP at current prices)	28.2%	27.1%	20.0%	25.7%
Overall Surplus/Deficit (TT\$ million)	-\$158.4	\$41.3	-\$131.1	-\$793.2
Overall Surplus/Deficit (as % of GDP at market prices)	-0.5%	0.1%	-0.3%	-1.6%
Gross Capital Formation (as % of GDP at current prices)	17.0%	26.8%	26.4%	n.a.
(Exports + Imports)/GDP at current prices	92.8%	108.7%	101.9%	n.a.
Foreign Direct Investment (US\$ million)	\$356.3	\$999.6	\$719.5	n.a.
Exports excluding all mineral fuels (as % of all exports, excluding mineral fuels under processing agreement)	49.7%	53.9%	55.6%	n.a.
Overall Surplus/Deficit on the Balance of Payments (US\$ million)	\$213.5	\$175.3	\$76.2	n.a.
Net Official Foreign Reserves (US\$ million)	\$701.1	\$854.5	\$980.4	\$1,016.8
Exchange rate, annual average selling price (TT\$:US\$)	\$6.04	\$6.28	\$6.30	\$6.30
Total Debt to GDP Ratio	48.0%	46.0%	44.1%	43.3%
Unemployment Rate	16.2%	15.0%	14.2%	14.6%
Rate of Inflation	3.3%	3.7%	5.6%	3.4%
Composite Share Price Index	167.4	352.3	436.3	414.9

Unless otherwise indicated data for 1999 are based on an October-September fiscal year except for the rate of inflation

^a = West Texas Intermediate

p = provisional

n.a. = not available

Sources: EB (November 1999), CBTT (2000), IFS (April 2000), BP Amoco (2000)

Most notably, real GDP growth has been continuous since 1994, reaching a nineteen-year high in 1999. At the same time, a fourteen-year low in the unemployment rate was reached in 1998. This had been achieved while the labour force grew continuously from 467,700 in 1990 to 562,600 in 1999, at an average rate of 2 percent per annum (CBTT 1993; 2000).⁶⁹ Moreover, this growth occurred in an environment of low and steady inflation, reaching a twenty-six year low in 1996, and a relatively stable US\$:TTS exchange rate.

This growth had been even more remarkable considering the 30.3 percent drop in the average annual price of oil between 1997 and 1998,⁷⁰ the difficulties in the world economy occasioned by the Asian and Russian crises, and the softening of prices for ammonia, urea, methanol, and steel products (see Table 8-4).

Table 8-4. Prices of Selected Commodities, 1994-9 (US\$/tonne)

	Ammonia fob Caribbean	Urea fob Caribbean	Methanol fob Rotterdam	Billets fob Latin America	Wire Rods fob Latin America
1994	169	148	269	223	277
1995	199	207	268	237	296
1996	188	195	153	222	276
1997	161	136	187	222	295
1998	118	105	139	221	264
September 1999	97	85	116	190	228

Source: EB (November 1999, 4)

Total government expenditure seemed to have settled around 25 percent of nominal GDP, in contrast to the period between 1976 and 1989 when the proportion was

⁶⁹ On 27 May 1998 Panday declared that his goal was to bring unemployment down to less than ten percent by the year 2000 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 316). This had only ever been achieved in 1980 and 1982, when the figure was 9.9 percent for both years (CBTT 1993).

⁷⁰ In 1982-3, the average annual price of oil dropped 12.5 percent, and in 1985-6 it dropped 46.4 percent (CBTT 1993).

consistently above 30 percent, peaking at 47.4 percent in 1982.⁷¹ Not only was government expenditure playing a smaller role in the economy, the proportion of its revenues from oil had been consistently dropping, reaching an all time low of 17.5 percent in 1999.⁷²

The most important driving force in the economy seemed to be foreign direct investment, which reached an all-time high of US\$999.6 million in 1997.⁷³ Importantly, the degree of openness in 1997 returned to pre-1966 levels, before the Williams government and Finance Minister ANR Robinson introduced the economic nationalist Finance Act. Finance Minister Kuei Tung (1998, 5) boasted in his 1998-9 budget speech that Trinidad and Tobago had become known to international investors as a place where "the decision making process on investment proposals ... [was] completed with speed and aggressiveness."

The most important investments occurred in the energy sector (see Table 8-5), whose industries were mainly located at Point Lisas in Couva.⁷⁴

⁷¹ The low of 20.0 percent in 1998 may not be comparable because of the change in the fiscal calendar that year.

⁷² In the period 1955-1991, the lowest proportion of current oil revenue to total revenue was 31.1 percent, in 1988 during the recession. The highest ratio was 73.2 percent, in 1975 (CBTT 1993).

⁷³ For the entire 1974-82 oil boom period, direct investment totalled US\$1,408.5 million, peaking at US\$202.8 million in 1975 (CBTT 1993).

⁷⁴ In February 1999, Neil Rolingson, Chief Executive Officer of the Point Lisas Port Development Company, had informed a visiting Canadian Trade Mission that Point Lisas had reached its saturation point with no more land available for development, but that "two or three other sites" were being identified for heavy industrial use (TG 23 February 1999).

Table 8-5. Direct Foreign Investment in Private Sector Enterprises By Sector Of Activity, 1991-7 (US\$ million)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Petroleum Industries	125.1	153.2	348.9	275.1	266	334.7	954.2
Food Drink and Tobacco	2.7	-0.5	1.9	5.7	3.2	4.3	8.4
Chemicals and Non-metallic Minerals	-0.5	0.3	0.1	128.7	1.7	2.3	2.3
Assembly Type and Related Industries	0.4	0.3	-0.4	-1.9	-0.4	0.7	-0.1
Distribution	-0.3	1.6	4.2	1	6.2	4.4	3.1
All Other Sectors	16.7	16.1	17.9	112.4	19	9.9	31.7
TOTAL	144.1	171	372.6	521	295.7	356.3	999.6

Sources: *Balance of Payments* (1994, 1998)

By March 1998 Trinidad and Tobago had been the site of one natural gas processing facility (750 million cubic feet per day); four "world scale" methanol plants (producing approximately 2.1 million tonnes per annum); eight ammonia plants (approximately 3.5 million tonnes per annum); and one urea plant (580,000 tonnes per annum); one iron and steel mill; and one iron carbide facility (300,000 tonnes per annum)⁷⁵ (GORTT 1998a, 30).⁷⁶ Between 1996 and 1998 two methanol plants (TTMC's second in May 1996, and Caribbean Methanol Company's second, Methanol IV, which started operations in March 1998) and three ammonia plants (PCS Nitrogen's⁷⁷ third, commissioned 11 April 1996, and its fourth, commissioned 11 February 1998; Farmland-Mississippi Chemicals' plant, commissioned on 5 August 1998) were opened (GORTT 1998a, 30-4; *CI* September 1998, 11).

⁷⁵ On 23 January 1999, the Nucor Iron Carbide plant (opened in 1994 as the first facility in the world to attempt to produce iron carbide commercially) suspended production on 23 January 1999 (*Gasco News* May 1999, 20; *EB* May 1999, 75).

⁷⁶ Most of the value of these plants were held by multinational companies, but local holdings were not insignificant. Government held 51 percent equity in two ammonia plants (Tringen I and II), and through the NGC, 49 percent in Phoenix Park Gas Processors, Ltd. and 10 percent in Atlantic LNG. Local conglomerate CL Financial held equity in all four methanol plants: 26 percent in TTMC I and II, 69 percent in the Caribbean Methanol Company, and 70 percent in the Methanol IV plant (GORTT 1998a, 30-4).

⁷⁷ The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan (PCS) Nitrogen company completed its purchase of the assets of Arcadian on 6 March 1997.

Unlike in oil,⁷⁸ Trinidad and Tobago held important positions in the ammonia and methanol industries: in 1998 it was the world's second leading exporter of ammonia (seeking to consolidate the leading position by 2002)⁷⁹ and the world's third largest exporter of methanol (GORTT 1998a, 32; *Investment* 1999; *CI* 2 July 1999, 1). The PCS Nitrogen complex was the world's largest single producer of ammonia (producing approximately 1.75 million tonnes per annum) and the Farmland-Mississippi Chemicals plant was the largest single train ammonia facility in the world (GORTT 1998a, 6; *CI* September 1998, 11).

On 19 April 1999 the US\$1 billion Atlantic LNG (in Point Fortin, St. Patrick) shipped its first exports, eight weeks ahead of schedule, making Trinidad and Tobago the world's eleventh exporter of LNG and the eighth largest producer, with an output of three million tonnes a year (*TE* 20 April 1999; *CI* 30 April 1999, 2). The plant was the first to be built in the Western Hemisphere since 1969, and successfully reintroduced a cost-effective liquefaction system (Bechtel/Phillips) that had not been used since then (*The Atlantic story* [1999], 2; *TE* 3 November 1998). In June 1998, before Atlantic came on stream, Amoco and Repsol announced their intention to quadruple their investment by building another "train" (*CI* July 1998, 10). Their partner British Gas remarked that "Trinidad's strategic location and political stability gave it an advantage over its competitors such as Algeria and Nigeria" (*Latin American Monitor: Caribbean* May 1999, 7).

⁷⁸ In 1999, Trinidad and Tobago held 0.1 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, accounted for 0.2 percent of world oil production, held 0.4 percent of the world's proven natural gas reserves, and accounted for 0.5 percent of world natural gas production (*BP Amoco* 2000).

⁷⁹ *Caribbean Insight* (September 1998, 11) claimed that Trinidad and Tobago had already become the world's largest exporter of ammonia.

In April 1999 CIL opened its 1.5 million tonnes per annum Midrex Direct Reduced Iron Plant, or DR3 Megamodule, the largest of its kind in the world (*EB* May 1999; GORTT 1998a, 33); that same month, Phoenix Park Gas Processors, Ltd. completed a major expansion in April 1999 to process the natural gas liquids from Atlantic LNG (*Gasco News* May 1999, 7-8); and on 28 December 1999 the 860,000 tonnes per annum, US\$250 million Titan Methanol plant (the largest producer in the Northern Hemisphere) began production (*TE* 30 December 1999). At the time of research, the energy sector was still in a dynamic phase, with agreements signed for the development of an ethylene project; a 500,000 tonnes per annum Iron Reduction Plant, by Cleveland Cliffs; and a US\$1 billion aluminium smelter⁸⁰ (GORTT 1998a, 30-1). In October 1997, Energy Minister Finbar Ganga noted that the sector was in an "unprecedented" period of expansion, "possibly far in excess of the boom years" of the mid-1970s (*CI* November 1997, 10).

Enabling the investments has been the dramatic increase in hydrocarbon reserves, as exploration off the deep waters of the east coast⁸¹ has resulted in a series of major oil and gas discoveries, including Amoco's largest oil find in the twenty-five years (*CI* September 1997; October 1997; November 1997; February 1998; June 1998; August 1998; November 1998). In 1992, proven reserves of crude oil were at a twenty-three year low of 466 million barrels. By 1999 reserves reached a fourteen-year high of 600 million barrels. Proven reserves of natural gas were at a thirteen-year low in 1993 of 8.5 trillion cubic feet. By 1999 it more than doubled to its current all-time high of 17.2

⁸⁰ After signing the agreement in November 1998, plans were suspended in February 1999 (*CI* March 1999, 7)

⁸¹ Between 22 April 1996 and 18 February 1998 thirteen production sharing contracts, involving sixteen international oil and gas companies operating through locally incorporated subsidiaries, were entered into with the government of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT 1998a, 11).

trillion cubic feet, with possible and probable reserves at 8.1 trillion cubic feet (GORTT 1997e; TIDCO 1999; CBTT 1993).⁸²

At the "Natural Gas in the Americas V" Conference, held in Trinidad and Tobago on 20-3 June 1999, Panday announced that Trinidad and Tobago expected to benefit from US\$2 billion in direct foreign investment in 1999 and 2000, noting that (measured on a per capita basis) Trinidad and Tobago was the largest investment partner of the United State after Canada, with over sixty multinational corporations from the US operating in the country (*TE* 22 June 1999, 4; Maingot 1998, 3).

The non-petroleum sector, however, had outstripped growth in the petroleum sector, revealing an apparent dynamism in the local economy that seemed to pervade all business in the country at the time: large and small, foreign and local, manufacturing and service, private and state-owned (*TE* 9 July 1999, 4; *TG* 27 February 1999; 30 April 1999; 15 July 1999). The country's balance of payments, foreign reserves, and non-oil exports appeared strong during this period, and the Panday government has expressed its fullest support for Free Trade arrangements, whether bilaterally or through CARICOM (*ACP-EU Courier* May-June 1998, 14).⁸³ Gross capital formation in 1997 was at a fifteen-year high, returning to pre-1982 levels (CBTT 1993).⁸⁴

⁸² In March 1998, the remaining life of natural gas reserves was estimated at 54 years at the current level of production. Since 1995 natural gas has outstripped crude oil production (GORTT 1998a, 36; *TG* 31 August 1998, 4).

⁸³ This has included a bilateral agreement with Costa Rica and CARICOM agreements with Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Haiti. Also on the government's agenda has been plans for the Central American Common Market, the Andean Group, Argentina, and Mexico (GORTT 1998c, 3; TIDCO 1999, 42).

⁸⁴ According to the author's calculations, real GDP levels in 1999 reached a level found between 1980 and 1981, approaching the all-time peak level in 1982.

From this position the government had embarked on a well-promoted social and infrastructural development programme, which Panday often linked to Trinidad and Tobago's economic success. For example, in an interview with *IBIS Magazine* in November 1997 Panday remarked, "We've brought a tremendous amount of stability into the economic life of the country [now that the people in Trinidad feel more strongly that they belong]. That is shown by the enormous investments that are coming into the country. I think our coming to office has brought more social, political and economic stability" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 183). Supporting this notion, in 1996 there had been a net immigration to Trinidad and Tobago of 1,554 persons, as opposed to a net emigration of 10,265 in 1995. The only other time net immigration was recorded during the 1964-96 period was in 1982-3 (ASD 1997).

The 1999 United Nations Human Development Report listed Trinidad and Tobago at the top of the seventy four nations graded for medium human development (*TE* 24 July 1999, 10). Under the Public Sector Investment Programme in the 1999 budget, TT\$394.78 million (the second highest allocation of the TT\$1,222 million proposed expenditure) went towards social infrastructure (GORTT 1998c, 39). Projects here included the establishment of a Centre for Socially Displaced persons to deal with the problem of vagrancy, the first centre being opened in San Fernando on 9 July 1999⁸⁵ (*TG* 12 July 1999, 16); a Community Development Fund to offer developmental assistance to and encourage participation of NGOs and community-based organisations (*TG* 9 July 1999, 10); a "Drop-In Centres" programme of the Domestic Violence Unit based in twenty-two communities (GORTT 1998c, 39); a Squatter Regularisation

⁸⁵ It was estimated that there were 150 street dwellers in San Fernando.

Programme in 1999 affecting 100,000 people in 25,000 homes (*TE* 24 July 1999, 10); and the raising of pensions from TT\$420 a month in 1995 to TT\$620 in 1998.

The government also aimed to provide "Water for All" by the year 2000, with Panday joking to a public audience "if in the year 2000 the water is not running, he [Minister Ganga Singh] will be" (*TG* 25 June 1999, 4). The project included a TT\$450 million programme to eliminate the water deficit in south Trinidad; the signing of an agreement on 25 August 1999 for the construction of a twenty four million gallons per day desalination plant at Point Lisas at a cost of US\$120 million (*EB* November 1999, 67); and the construction of a TT\$131 million Caroni Water Treatment commissioned in 29 April 2000 (GORTT 2000).

In addition, the number of telephone customers increased from 239,000 at end of 1997 to 255,000 at end of August 1998; a Rural Electrification Programme had been embarked upon; and on 25 February 1999 New Zealand Post International signed an agreement to manage the new Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation for a period of five years⁸⁶ (*EB* May 1999, 75; GORTT 1988c, 35-7).

In its 1999 local government elections campaign, the UNC advertised that in its three and a half years over four hundred kilometres of roads were rebuilt and resurfaced, and thirty completely new bridges were built in addition to the repair and the rebuilding of existing bridges. Impressive flyovers in San Fernando and the Churchill-Roosevelt/Uriah Butler interchange were being constructed, and the Uriah Butler

⁸⁶ It was reported that only 50 percent of mail was delivered within twenty four hours of posting, and many areas received infrequent deliveries or none at all. The parcel service was found to be so

highway connecting north and south Trinidad was being reconstructed. On 21 June 1999 the government launched its Rural Transport Services Project reducing fares from Blanchisseuse to Port of Spain from TT\$15 to TT\$8. At the launch, Panday declared that he wanted to be remembered as "a Prime Minister who loved all his people" and promised to end the exclusion of citizens of rural areas (*TG* 22 June 1999, 3).

The largest, and most controversial, infrastructural project was the US\$105 airport expansion. The project was begun by the Manning administration under the name Project Pride, but was halted due to charges of corruption. The Panday administration revived the project as essential to its vision of making Trinidad and Tobago a communications hub in the twenty-first century. On 22 April 1997 a report by retired Justice Lennox Deyalsingh found a "measure of collusion" in the granting of the construction contract, as Ishwar Galbaransingh had been a member of the committee that selected the management team who in turn granted the contract to the Northern-Yorke Construction-Coosal's consortium, in which Galbaransingh held a major interest. On 25 April Galbaransingh resigned from the chairmanship of TIDCO and on 1 May the Airports Authority chairman, Ameer Edo, also resigned, together with two other government-appointed members. In July 1997 the courts cleared Galbaransingh of charges, and on 3 September 1998 he received a new TT\$207 million construction contract⁸⁷ (*CI* April 1997; May 1997; June 1997; October 1998; *TE* 16 April 1998; 8 August 1999). On 22 June 1999 Panday told a public meeting, "I make one mistake with the airport contract. ... I stopped the contract while the inquiry was going on. I

unreliable that according to a 1996 survey the average citizen mailed only one parcel in his or her lifetime (*CI* 23 April 1999, 3)

⁸⁷ The day the contract was signed, the media's attention was on the government's temporary appointment of Occah Seapaul to the Senate (*CI* October 1998, 11).

should never have done that. ... I am going to build that airport come hell or high water. They could do what they want, that airport coming" (*TE* 24 June 1999, 5). On 8 June 1999 Transparency International and seven construction industry associations (later supported by Roman Catholic Archbishop Anthony Pantin and Anglican Bishop Reverend Rawle Douglin) called on President Robinson to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the award of contracts for the airport project (*TG* 27 July 1999; 11 August 1999; *TG* 25 July 1999, 1). On 28 July President Robinson responded that an inquiry would be in the public interest, but that based on his own judgement he did not have the power to appoint such a Commission (*TG* 1 August 1999, 1). In February 2000 the government announced that the new deadline for the airport project was 5 June 2000, and its official opening date would be Independence Day (*TG* 12 February 2000).

Physical infrastructure wasn't the only area of concentration. The Panday administration embarked on major changes in the education system, amounting to what Panday called a "revolution" in education (GORTT 1998c, 2-3). The major aspect of the "revolution" was the abolition of the Common Entrance exam, announced during the opening of the Eric Williams Collection on 22 March 1998 and effected in early 2000 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 274-84; *TE* 8 April 2000). In May 1999 the IDB approved a loan of US\$105 million, supplemented by the government's US\$45 million injection, for a Secondary Education Modernisation Programme to construct twenty new secondary schools and improve the one hundred existing schools. The government's aim was to increase the present secondary education coverage from the existing level of 69 percent "to ensure there is universal secondary education for all by the year 2001" (*CI* 4 June 1999; 2 July 1999; *TE* 23 June 1999, 6; *TG* 23 June 1999, 19; *EB* November 1999, 67). Other aspects of the government's reforms included curriculum reform, and the standardisation of textbooks, which antagonistically

provoked the Textbook Evaluation Committee (headed by independent senator and UWI-based literary critic, Professor Ken Ramchand), TTUTA, and the Publishers' and Booksellers' Collective of Trinidad and Tobago against the government (*TE* 17 July 1999; 20 July 1999; 21 July 1999; *TG* 7 July 1999; 16 July 1999).

However, there were many problems with both the education and health systems, despite apparent attempts at reform and modernisation.⁸⁸ Seemingly constant throughout the period were protests by doctors, junior doctors, and nurses over poor conditions, shortages of supplies and staff, and administration problems with the new Regional Health Authority system (e.g., *TE* 5 August 1999, 2-3). Also, in the education system many schools were in extremely poor condition, sometime unsanitary (*TE* 23 June 99, 8; *TG* 17 June 1999, 3; *TG* 8 July 1999, 3; *TG* 14 June 1999, 8).

Protests of a more diffuse nature were quite common as well. From August to September 1998 residents of the low-income area, John John, in East Port of Spain demanded that the reputedly upscale twenty-three apartment John John Towers (whose construction began under the Manning administration) be given to residents of the area. The government resisted their protests and vandalism, and instituted a lottery system to distribute the housing (*TE* 4 September 1998, 10). In November 1998 there occurred simultaneously a sit-out at St. Ann's Hospital, an impasse between the Tunapuna-Piarco Corporation and the Ministry of Local Government, and road blocks by community protesters in Maloney, La Horqetta, and Mayaro/Guayaguyare (*TG* 19 November 1998; *TE* 18 November 1998). Panday dismissed these as politically

⁸⁸ The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU 1998a, 21-2) identified the NAR's 1989 budget cuts as beginning the decay in the health and education sectors.

motivated (they all occurred in PNM-controlled areas, except for Mayaro, which only in 1995 came under UNC control). In Mayaro, fire hoses were reportedly turned on the protesters (*TE* 18 November 1998). In June 1999 residents of East Port of Spain marched against crime, police harassment, unemployment, and racism (*TE* 6 June 1999, 3) and in July residents of Tabaquite (the constituency of Education Minister Adesh Nanan) mounted a series of protests and roadblocks, ending on 19 July when two protesters were arrested for littering and obstructing a free passage (*TE* 6 July 1999, 3; *TG* 15 July 1999; 16 July 1999; 20 July 1999). Referring to the protests, the *Guardian* accused the government of "trumpeting their triumphs ... [by] looking at the forest and failing to see the trees" (*TG* 19 November 1998). At an election meeting in 1999, Panday (a veteran protester) contrasted himself to Manning, whom he accused of being a weak leader who was afraid to govern: "Manning was afraid of protests. He did not understand that anything you going to do people are going to protest, but Manning was the kind of man who only know to back back from issues" (*TE* 26 June 1999, 6).

Controversy surrounded the state sector, particularly the National Flour Mills, BWIA, WASA/Severn Trent, National Petroleum, National Maintenance Training and Security Company, the URP and the section of the Ministry of Education responsible for school textbooks (*CI* February 1998; March 1998, 3; *TE* 27 May 1998). Both sides not uncommonly levelled charges of racism. For instance, on 16 January 1997 Panday announced that he had requested a full report on the appointment in September 1996 of Ken Soodhoo as consultant with the National Petroleum Marketing Company. Soodhoo had been a member of the National Petroleum board, and was also managing director of state-owned First Citizens Bank, from where he was dismissed in December 1996 under unclear circumstances. On 26 January, Soodhoo resigned from National Petroleum but was asked to remain until mid-February to complete work in progress.

Panday withheld publication of the Soodhoo report, however, claiming that it was libellous. He had also remarked that the concerns about Soodhoo's appointment were unfounded and that if Soodhoo's name were "Voodoo" the opposition would not have made their allegations of bribery (*CI* February 1998, 4). The *Express* voiced its indignation that dissent against the government was so regularly interpreted by Panday as having racial or partisan motivation, while the PNM regularly accused the UNC of being a government for "themselves, their friends, and their families" (*TE* 27 May 1998, 8; *TG* 17 August 1998, 1). In May 1999 the government introduced an Integrity Bill, but despite its scope and sanctions it had been dismissed by the opposition and media commentators (Ryan 1999b, 247-8).

Despite the buoyancy of the economy, the lowest unemployment rate in fourteen years, and the social programmes of the government, a section of the labour movement bitterly opposed the Panday administration, ostensibly for its programme of privatisation, retrenchment, encouragement of low-paying jobs, and "anti-union" labour laws (*TE* 16 June 1999, 16). Perhaps most important in souring the relationship between Panday and the labour movement had been the bitter and largely unsuccessful TTUTA work to rule action from September 1996 to May 1997⁸⁹ and the strike, led by the OWTU, by seven hundred non-academic staff at the UWI from 31 March to 28 May 1998.⁹⁰ As Labour Day (19 June) 1998 approached, Errol McLeod, president of

⁸⁹ Panday had called the striking teachers "criminals," since they were barred from strike activity under the Industrial Relations Act. Their action was largely seen as a failure, as they settled for a 2 percent pay increase for 1997, a 3 percent increase in 1998, and none for 1996, after rejecting on 21 May an offer of a 5 percent increase covering 1990-8 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 339; *CI* October 1996; June 1997).

⁹⁰ The strike action, in which occurred acts of sabotage including the throwing of two petrol bombs at the home of principal Compton Bourne, was taken to secure a 10 percent pay claim for 1994-7. The strike, also considered a failure, was eventually settled through the Labour Minister, whose intervention the union had initially rejected, with a 7 percent increase for 1996-9 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 339; *CI* May 1998; June 1998).

NATUC and the OWTU, said that he would not be marching with "certain people," exacerbating tensions within the movement, most vocally between the Communication Workers Union (CWU) and NUGFW (*CI* July 1998, 11; *TE* 19 June 1998; 20 June 1998; *Newsday* 19 June 1998, 5). Panday delivered a nationwide broadcast indicating that for the first time in thirty years he would not be taking part in Labour Day observances. He urged labour unity, a commitment to the welfare of workers in the contemporary environment, and defended his government's record with a lengthy list of achievements.⁹¹ Panday also relinquished his post as President of the ATS&GWTU. The following year the NATUC executive, by a vote of nine to four, invited both Panday and Manning to Labour Day celebrations, further pitting the NUGFW against the OWTU, TTUTA, PSA, and CWU, in particular. Manning had accepted NATUC's invitation, but on the eve of Labour Day celebrations Panday declined his invitation and once again urged labour unity. Manning then changed his mind (*TG* 19 June 1999, 1; *TE* 21 June 1999, 3). In 1998 and 1999 the ATS&GWTU, the union with the largest Indian membership, did not participate in the Fyzabad observances. Other unions, on both sides of the dispute, did not attend. NUGFW members were booed off the platform at the traditional Fyzabad rally, and the union subsequently passed a resolution for McLeod's resignation from NATUC (*TG* 20 June 1999; 5 July 1999; 25 July 1999; *TE* 20 June 1999, 3). The OWTU, PSA, TTUTA, and CWU allied themselves into a

⁹¹ Panday's list included the introduction of the National Minimum Wage of \$7 an hour; increasing the Old Age Pension from TT\$420 to TT\$520 a month; the introduction of the National Minimum Wage of \$7 an hour; increasing the Old Age Pension; the commitment to provide a \$300 million Tax-Free Housing Bond for the financing of low cost homes; the speedy determination of long overdue payment of money owed to public servants; the conclusion of three separate bi-lateral three-year Collective Agreements involving close to one hundred thousand public sector employees, resolving outstanding disputes dating as far back as the 1990-2 period, and the 1993-5 period; the regularisation of some five thousand daily, hourly and weekly paid workers with the Central Government from more than ten years, in some cases; the commitment to establish an Employee Stock Ownership Plan; and the support given to micro business and small business, particularly through the NGO Fund Aid, which was said to have generated over twenty five thousand jobs (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 338-44; *Newsday* 19 June 1998, 12-3).

firm anti-government coalition and organised joint protests, including a rally in Port of Spain on 10 September 1999 demanding profit sharing and job protection in the National Flour Mills, TSTT, and Tringen, whose 51 percent shareholdings the government had planned to divest (*TE* 24 July 1999, 8; *CI* 24 September 1999, 4; *TE* 5 August 1999, 7; *TG* 1 August 1999, 5).

The 1999 Local Government Elections

The election campaign for the 12 July 1999 was fought aggressively by the UNC. Three years earlier, at the announcements of the results of the 1996 local government elections Panday declared,

... Most important I want to congratulate the strategists for the strategy they evolved in this election. If you notice how this election was fought. It was a pincer movement, a pincer movement where we moved from our strongholds and we were moving in to encircle and entrap the PNM and bring about victory on the citadel (*applause*).

That is what the movement has begun from the east and is coming down. We are taking Sangre Grande and we are beginning to win seats in Tunapuna and so on and the strategy is to take from the East and to come down and to drive them into the Gulf of Paria on the West (*applause*). And from the South, move up and push them into the Atlantic Ocean in the North. (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 9)

The UNC had been making such moves. On 20 October 1998 the party reportedly held its first meeting at the Queen's Park Savannah in Port of Spain (*TE* 22 October 1998); in early 1999 it acquired an office at Piggot's Corner, Belmont, east Port of Spain, and the party had expressed intentions of acquiring the former office of PNM MP Kenneth Valley in Diego Martin. In 1999 the party delayed its campaign launch by one week to 20 June so that it could move from its regular Chaguanas Mid-Centre Mall venue to Macoya in the PNM-controlled Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation. At that rally,

the amount of Africans present surprised seemingly all observers. Panday declared in anticipated triumph, "That Berlin Wall of division that the PNM constructed to keep the people apart has come tumbling down, never to be put back again" (*TE* 21 June 1999, 3). The UNC contested every seat in a local government election for the first time.

During its term in government, the UNC were able to attract an impressive list of former PNM and NAR members: Errol Mahabir (former PNM Deputy Leader, 1971-86, and Minister of Government, 1966-86) had been appointed chairman of ICN in January 1997, and member of the Task Force on State Boards on 11 April 1998 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 252; *TG* 28 December 1997); former NAR Minister Winston Dookeran was appointed Central Bank Governor on 15 July 1997 (*CI* August 1997, 11); former NAR minister Clive Pantin headed a 1997 Task Force to investigate errors in schoolbook texts (*CI* October 1997, 11); Carson Charles (former NAR leader, 1992-3, and ONR member), along with thirty supporters, including members from his 1993 executive, joined the UNC in November 1997 (*TG* 28 December 1997); Muriel Donawa-McDavidson (PNM founding member and Minister of Government, 1981-6) in 1998 was appointed supervisor of National Days and Festivals activities, and deputised for Culture Minister Dr. Daphne Phillips at the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation's Independence celebrations in 1998 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 328-9; *TE* 28 September 1998); former NAR minister, Leader of Government Business in the House, and MP for Toco/Manzanilla Joseph Toney officially resigned from the NAR to join the UNC (*TG* 29 September 1998); former PNM member and Speaker of the House (1991-5) Occah Seapaul was sworn in as a temporary government senator on 3 September 1998 (*CI* October 1998, 11); former ULF and UNC member Kelvin Ramnath was sworn in on 15 December 1998 as a temporary senator (*TE* 16 December 1998); Desmond Cartey (former PNM minister,

1976-86, and MP for Laventille, 1981-6) was appointed manager of Social and Community Services on 1 June 1999 (10 July 1999, 3); and former PNM Attorney-General (1991-95) Keith Sobion was named adjudicator in the dispute over settlement of the 1997 contract between the Northern-Yorke-Coosal consortium and the Airports Authority (*TE* 16 June 1999, 8).

The UNC's media advertisements featured daily in the papers and almost hourly on radio (*TG* 11 July 1999, 21). Its television advertisements featured a surprising amount of Africans, and the party had even purchased advertising on cable television during foreign programming. The majority of advertisements sought to prove the claims that no government had done as much in so little time providing impressive facts and details about what had already been achieved in its development, welfare, and infrastructure programmes.⁹²

Most observers agreed that the PNM fought a much weaker campaign. Weakened by the October 1996 party elections and the defections of MPs Lasse and Griffith, in March 1997 a constitution review committee was established, leading to the appointment of a Change Team in February 1998, and a Special Convention for the discussion of party reform on 19 July 1998. This did not stop dissatisfaction. On 19 February 1998, Opposition Chief Whip Ken Valley submitted a letter of resignation over the replacement of senator Penelope Beckles for the support she had given to Keith Rowley in October 1996. Valley withdrew the resignation the following day after talks with Manning (*CI* March 1998, 11). Manning further aggravated members by his

⁹² The most famous advertisement, however, had no text and merely superimposed on the PNM's Balisier House headquarters the sign, "Jurassic Park" (*TG* 6 July 1999, 12).

frequent absences in the country from March to May 1998, and in particular his absence during the opening of the Eric Williams Collection on 22 March 1998, for which Manning called his critics "doltish" and "uninformed" as he claimed he had obligations in Venezuela. On 11 May, however, Manning announced at a press conference that he had been undergoing heart treatment, culminating with surgery in Cuba on 21-2 April. Manning did not even inform PNM executive party members, including Party Chairman Linda Baboolal and Deputy Leader Valley, explaining that he did not want to cause "anxiety and trauma" in the country.⁹³ Manning was severely criticised by the press, who drew parallels with his government's phoney reports on Clint Huggins in October 1994. While Valley and Baboolal refrained from criticism, MP for Diego Martin East Colm Imbert indicated that some colleagues were not pleased (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 351-2; vol. 2, 279; *CI* June 1998, 11; *TG* 13 May 1998). In June 1998 after Jaigobin Nanga resigned as chairman of the PNM-controlled Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, a PNM councillor voted for the UNC's candidate, resulting in a six-six tie. The PNM's candidate, Jerry Narace, won the chairmanship by the drawing of lots (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 5). As the June 1998 convention approached, there was further public criticism of Manning by older members – in particular Kamaluddin Mohammed, Ferdi Ferreira, Overand Padmore, John Eckstein (former minister, 1981-6, 1991-5), and Cuthbert Joseph (former minister, 1971-86) (*TE* 20 October 1996, 13; *TG* 13 May 1998; 28 June 1998, 8; 5 July 1998; 19 July 1998; *Independent* 18 July 1998, 7; *TE* 19 July 1998; Manning

⁹³ President Robinson had been on leave during the period 10 February 1998 to 24 August 1998 recovering from his own heart surgery, about which the nation was well-informed. Robinson's health was of national concern when he fainted during a live television broadcast of the 31 August 1997 Independence Day parade at the Savannah opposite President's House. It was also public knowledge when Robinson was Prime Minister that he had undergone surgery in February 1988. Panday, too, underwent heart surgery on 30 December 1995, and six years earlier in December 1989, with the full knowledge of the country (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 1, 350-1)

1999). Panday often poked fun at Manning, telling a public meeting on 23 November 1997, for example, "One man in politics appears incapable of learning from his mistakes ... But I have to tell you, the truth is, I must confess, I like it. I like it so. Leave him right where he is because as long as he is there now, I will always be here now (*applause*) Until 2015" (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 174).

Manning consistently charged the UNC government of "creeping dictatorship, 'thiefing' and lies," referred to them as "wicked, malicious, and vindictive," and warned, "Look at Guyana and you will see what happens when the people feel an election was less than honest." (*TG* 17 August 1998, 1). Valid claims and concerns were mixed with wild accusations about "diabolical plots" that the government wanted to place Manning under house arrest, or that the government staged protests against itself so that it could call a state of emergency and postpone elections (*TE* 24 December 1997; 27 September 1998; *CI* December 1996; February 1998; *TG* 20 November 1998; 25 April 1999).

The PNM's 1999 campaign was noticeably less well financed than the UNC's,⁹⁴ and turned out significantly smaller crowds.⁹⁵ Valley said he would consider quitting politics if the UNC won the polls (*TG* 23 June 1999, 3). The campaign criticised the UNC as being "united in corruption, dividing the country, nepotism, attacking our rights and freedoms, confrontation and scandal" and providing "the worst [governance] we have ever experienced in the history of Trinidad and Tobago" (*TG* 4 July 1999, 3; *TE* 11 July 1999, 7).

⁹⁴ After the election, Manning claimed that the UNC spent over TT\$7 million and the PNM under TT\$1 million (*TG* 27 July 1999, 15).

The PNM's case was strengthened by the frequent problems that its Regional and Municipal corporations faced in the URP programme, and particularly with Minister of Local Government Dhanraj Singh, who in 1998 was given the nickname, "The Sheriff." Singh had been in trouble with the law on a number of occasions,⁹⁶ and on 15 March 1998 (the day before the URP was to newly begin operations under the Ministry of Local Government rather than the Ministry of Works) the Prime Minister announced that Singh was no longer allowed to carry his firearm (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 256). The URP had been suspended by the government in December 1996 and January 1997 (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 175). The PNM corporations filed motions of no confidence against Singh in 1997 and in February 1999 refused to implement the URP in protest (*TG* 28 December 1997; *TG* 2 February 1999). On the day of the elections, a High Court judge ruled in favour of the chairman, aldermen, councillors, and electors of the PNM-controlled Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation against its CEO Raman Mahabir, who had breached the law by acting on the instructions, requests and directions of Singh on how, when and where road improvement works should take place within the Tunapuna/Piarco area. Chairman Jerry Narace remarked, "My actions will ensure that local government will never be taken advantage of by a bully" (*TG* 14 July 1999, 2-3).

To the surprise of many observers, the UNC lost ground in the 1999 elections (Table 8-6).

⁹⁵ The *Express* (11 July 1999, 7) estimated 10,000 at the UNC's final rally at Macoya on 10 July, and 3,000 at the PNM's in Woodford Square.

⁹⁶ In April 1997, Singh appeared before Chaguanas Magistrate Marcia Ayres-Caesar to answer various charges, including assaulting Assistant Traffic Commissioner Norton Regist, dangerous driving, driving without due consideration for other motorists, driving without insurance and failure to produce insurance on demand by a police officer. In March 1998, he was accused of brandishing a gun at URP

Table 8-6. Election Statistics, 1999 Local Government Elections

	Number of candidates	Number of seats won	Total Votes	% of Votes
PNM	124	67	157,923	46.3%
UNC	124	57	175,786	51.5%
NAR	9	0	813	0.2%
PPM	1	0	10	0.0%
Independent	17	0	3,494	1.0%
Rejected Ballots			3,061	0.9%
TOTALS	275	124	341,087	100%

Source: GORTT ([1999a])

In terms of the control of corporations, the same result obtained in 1999 as did in 1996: the PNM held seven (Port of Spain, San Fernando, Arima, Point Fortin, Diego Martin, San Juan/Laventille, Tunapuna/Piarco), the UNC six (Chaguanas, Sangre Grande, Rio Claro/Mayaro, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, Penal/Debe, Princes Town), and the Siparia Corporation was tied. Despite the hyperbole surrounding the election, a lower proportion of voters, 38.7 percent, turned out than in 1996, an overall decrease of 17,933 voters. Despite this, the UNC increased its share of the vote to 51.5 percent in 1999 as opposed to 49.9 percent in 1996. The PNM also increased its share to 46.3 percent from 43.7 percent. This was the result of the NAR's further loss of 19,900 votes.

Though once again polling less votes than the UNC, the PNM could better claim victory this time around as it increased its number of seats by four and secured 2,338 more votes than in 1996. The over-confident UNC lost four seats and received 2,062 less votes than in 1996. The seats that changed from UNC to PNM were Marabella South/Vistabella and Springvale/Paradise in the San Fernando Municipal Corporation;

workers. Referring to the workers, whom he charged were undisciplined, he told reporters, "I am going to stick on them like hog love mud" (*TE* 21 February 2000).

Malabar in the Arima Municipal Corporation; and Enterprise South in the Chaguanas Municipal Corporation.

The UNC called for recounts in Apex/Fyzabad (in the tied Siparia Regional Corporation);⁹⁷ Marabella West and Cocoyea/Tarouba (in the San Fernando Municipal Corporation) (*TG* 14 July 1999, 1). The Cocoyea/Tarouba recount took one week, with the results changing from 1425 (PNM)-1424 (UNC) on 12 July; to 1428 (UNC)-1424 (PNM) on 14 July; to the final 1453 (PNM)-1446 (UNC) on 19 July. The tie in Siparia had not been settled even after three weeks, after the UNC had contested the 16 July vote in which one UNC councillor submitted an invalid ballot, which would have resulted in control being given to the PNM (*TG* 31 July 1999, 10; *TE* 18 July 1999, 5). Contrary to the expectations of some observers that Trinidad might explode like Guyana, there was no violence or popular demonstration at any time by either side during the contentious recounts and settling of the tie.

Toward the "Mother of All Battles"

The election results provoked much commentary. The *Express* chastised the perhaps media- and information-obsessed UNC government that the election results showed that citizens were "not *tabula rasas* to be written upon by what they see on TV or read in the newspapers" (*TE* 14 July 1999, 12). In a provocative analysis, Lloyd Best argued that the UNC had peaked in 1995-6 and that the pendulum was swinging back (*TTR* August 1999, 1-3). The UNC, however, noted that it polled more votes in 1999 and

⁹⁷ Won by the PNM's Arthur Sanderson (NAR MP for Fyzabad in 1986-91).

claimed that if the results were superimposed on the 1995 electoral boundaries, the party would have captured nineteen seats (*TE* 25 July 1999, 11).⁹⁸ Nevertheless, on 14 July 1999 a specially convened caucus of the UNC was convened to discuss its electoral performance (*TE* 16 July 1999, 7).

Almost immediately after the elections, the controversies that previously engulfed the government re-emerged: protests in Tabaquite, opposition to the standardisation of textbooks (*TG* 16 July 1999; 17 July 1999; *TE* 17 July 1999; 20 July 1999; 21 July 1999), government's defence of the death penalty (*TG* 19 July 1999, 3; *TE* 27 July 1999, 12), residents' opposition to the Emancipation memorial (*TG* 3 June 1999; 19 July 1999; 24 July 1999; 27 July 1999; 29 July 1999), building a police recreation complex adjacent to the Jamaat-al-Muslimeen lands (*TG* 10 December 1999; *CI* 17 December 1999, 4), attempts to persuade the President to call an inquiry into airport contracts, protests by the CWU, PSA, OWTU, and TTUTA (*CI* 12 November 1999, 4; *TG* 4 August 1999; 3 May 2000; *TE* 15 March 2000; 27 March 2000; 1 April 2000), and police corruption. The last matter was raised by a report implicating thirteen policemen in the September 1998 prison escape of drug dealer Deochand Ramdhanie, prompting Panday and Manning to issue a joint statement agreeing to work together to investigate corruption within the police force. Three officers were subsequently charged in October (*CI* 10 September 1999; *CI* 24 September 1999; *CI* 15 October 1999, 4).

On 20 October 1999 Panday announced a major Cabinet re-shuffle. For the first time in his administration, Panday took responsibility for a ministry (Public Information and

⁹⁸ The remarks were similar to Eric Williams's after the 1958 General Elections, when it had been noted that the PNM secured more votes than the DLP (*PNM Weekly* 21 April 1958).

Communication); Kuei Tung acquired Planning and Development from Trevor Sudama, who was moved to Agriculture; Lasse (already in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development) was elevated to Cabinet rank,⁹⁹ while Job was also brought into that ministry while retaining his Tobago Ministry; Adesh Nanan was moved to the new ministry of Tourism; and Kamla Persad-Bissessar moved to the troubled Ministry of Education. The most important addition was the addition as Minister in the Prime Minister's Office of forty-year old Lindsay Gillette, chairman of Gillette Technology Holdings (GTH), which owned Open Telecom, Computers and Controls Ltd, a cable television company, two radio stations (Power Radio 102 FM and Love 94 FM) as well as Gillette's Building Supplies. Gillette, appointed as a senator with Cabinet rank, was not a member of the UNC and his family were well-known supporters of the PNM. He was described by the Prime Minister as a "trouble shooter" who would move "from ministry to ministry, dynamiting the logjams, breaking the bottlenecks, unlocking the floodgates and so freeing up the system on a case-by-case basis." Panday argued,

one of the major constraints to implementation has been the bureaucratic bottlenecks in a system that is patently outdated. Despite the best efforts of some of our public servants, they remain shackled by a dysfunctional system. ... I am conscious of the fact that to effect a meaningful overhaul of the system would require constitutional changes, and at the present time we do not have the required majority to effect such changes. That time will come. We expect to have that majority in this House after the next elections. But in the meantime I must do something to speed up implementation of our plans and programmes. Since I cannot change the bureaucracy, I intend to pierce it and penetrate it. If I cannot remove the bureaucratic constraints then I must go over it, under it, through it or around it (*TE* 21 October 1999).

The first major accomplishment of Minister Gillette concerned the signing of the agreement for the second and third trains of the Atlantic LNG plant, which involved an

⁹⁹ Rupert Griffith had been brought into the Cabinet on 28 May 1998 as head of the new Ministry of Information, Communication, Training and Distance Learning, which on 20 October 1999

estimated investment of US\$7 billion, the largest single investment in the country's history. The government had intended to sign the twenty-year agreement on 31 January 2000, but were opposed by the chairmen of NGC (Steve Ferguson) and the National Petroleum Marketing Company (Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan), who were reportedly supported by Finance Minister Kuei Tung. They argued strongly against Clause 7 of the agreement, concerning the pricing of the gas supply, while Energy Minister Finbar Gangar was extremely vocal in his support. The Prime Minister and the Attorney-General apparently attempted to broker a deal satisfactory to all parties, causing lengthy postponement and wide debate, including opposition by the PNM, UWI economist Dennis Pantin, the OWTU, and TTUTA. On 9 March Panday left the country and appointed Gillette as acting Prime Minister.¹⁰⁰ The deal was signed on 13 March 2000 by Finance Minister Kuei Tung, who was acting for Minister of Energy Gangar (*TG* 6-7 February 2000; 9 February 2000; 12 February 2000; 23 February 2000; 28 February 2000; 2-4 March 2000; *TE* 9-10 February 2000; 12 February 2000; 21 February 2000; 23 February 2000; 14 March 2000).

A major coup occurred earlier on 7 January 2000, when Panday appointed as CARICOM ambassador (a post vacant for the previous three years) Kamaluddin Mohammed who had served in a similar capacity to CARICOM's precursor, the Caribbean Free Trade Area (*TE* 8 January 2000; *CI* 14 January 2000, 3).

Panday had reduced to Training and Distance Learning.

¹⁰⁰ The fact that Gillette – recently appointed, unelected, and not a member of the UNC – was appointed over the usual choice of John Humphrey caused controversy itself. After returning on 17 March, Panday remarked, "I don't know what all the fuss is about. I left the country for one week and from what I was reading in the papers I thought the world was tumbling down ... What is it? Is it his race? He is Chinese. Is it his religion? He is a Catholic. Or is it his height? The fella is a little short" (*TE* 22 March 2000; 18 March 2000). Gillette was appointed acting Prime Minister again on 10 April 2000 (*TE* 12 April 2000).

The government also moved to solve the THA issue. Marking the centenary of the establishment of the Colony of Trinidad and Tobago,¹⁰¹ Hochoy Charles delivered another tough message on Independence Day 1999, stating that the THA would "step up the struggle for true policy-making powers" and that "come what may, we will act decisively to ensure Tobago has equal status with Trinidad in the nation of Trinidad and Tobago" (*TG* 1 September 1999, 3; *TE* 1 September 1999, 6). After more squabbling in October-November 1999 between the THA, the Tobago opposition, and the central government over budget allocations and accountability (*CI* 15 October 1999; 19 November 1999), the government and the THA agreed to appoint a six-member task force¹⁰² to revise the THA Act "and possibly amend the Constitution to create a better relationship between Trinidad and Tobago" (*TE* 29 April 2000).

A month after the Cabinet re-shuffle, on 21 November 1999, at the fourth anniversary of the UNC government, Panday set a target for the UNC of between twenty-four and twenty-six seats which he said would come in less than a year, before the due date of January 2001. Panday criticised his party, its executive and his own role in the 1999 election results, promising to revitalise the party machinery to concentrate on elections rather than on government, advertisements, and crowds at public meetings. Panday declared, "Citizens can be assured that the period between now and the elections will be the most exciting, dramatic, confused, desperate and traumatic period in this country since Independence." (*TG* 22 November 1999; *CI* 26 November 1999, 3). Panday embarked on a tour of all thirty-six constituencies, sometimes heavily criticising party

¹⁰¹ 1 January 1999 marked the precise date of the centenary which, as Tobago academic Susan Craig-James complained, was not even commemorated by the government with a stamp (*TG* 19 June 1999, 8).

members, executives, and constituency organisations, as in the marginal constituencies of Fyzabad and Tunapuna, which he called "the worst constituency in the whole country" because of its internecine warfare (*TG* 3 February 2000; 17 February 2000; *TE* 3 February 2000).

Panday claimed that the UNC had the support of Griffith, Lasse, Job, and Lindsay Gillette, who also appeared on the UNC platform of 21 November. Also, James Carville, senior political adviser to US President Bill Clinton, was hired by the UNC, reportedly at a cost of more than TT\$1.2 million, and made the first of several visits to the country on 19 January 2000 (*TE* 21 January 2000).

On 3 February Panday announced as enemies of the UNC President Arthur NR Robinson, Chief Justice Michael de la Bastide, CCN, the NAR, the PNM, Lloyd Best, and Selwyn Ryan (*TG* 5 February 2000). Despite objections from the press, appeals by Selwyn Ryan for State protection, and a MATT-organised press conference at which Amnesty International spoke, Panday remained unapologetic and continued to reiterate his list, even joking that he was protecting Ryan by telling people not to read his columns, since readers may want to hit him after reading his "stupidness" (*TE* 8 February 2000; 10 February 2000; 12 February 2000).

The attack against the President came in the middle of two stand-offs. The first occurred when, after a request was made by the Prime Minister on 17 January 2000, Robinson delayed replacing two government senators on the grounds that this violated

¹⁰² Two members were to be appointed by the government, two by the THA's executive council, one by the opposition, and one by the new minority party in the THA, the People's Empowerment Party (PEP), led by Deborah Moore-Miggins.

the UNC-NAR Heads of Agreement. The two senators, Agnes Williams and Nathaniel Moore, were NAR appointees and on 15 December 1999 voted against the government's Tourism Development Bill. Panday had chosen two other Tobagonians, Winston John (a member of the NAR Tobago Island Council) and Jearlean John (CEO of the Public Transport Services Commission) to replace them. Robinson and Panday engaged in an exchange of insults reminiscent of the 1987-8 period in the NAR Government, except reversed: Robinson accused Panday of not consulting him and speaking a "blatant untruth" about his alleged requests to reduce the frequency of their meetings; Panday, on the other hand, referred to the constitutionality of his actions. The public dispute prompted the IRO to meet with the President on 31 January, and Hochoy Charles also offered to mediate. Manning, however, supported Panday. Robinson finally acceded on 2 February via a press release, and the senators were sworn in on 8 February (*TE* 22 January 2000; 30 January 2000; 1 February 2000; 3 February 2000; 9 February 2000).

The second stand-off occurred immediately afterwards, when President Robinson delayed, once again, the signing of the instruments to effect a Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice. This resulted from a speech given by Chief Justice Michael de la Bastide at the opening of the law term on 16 September 1999, in which he criticised as a "dangerous and unwarranted" threat to integrity of the judiciary a proposal that the Attorney-General should control its financing (*CI* 24 September 1999, 3-4). On 16 December 1999 the Prime Minister announced in a nationwide broadcast that the government would establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the claims, as it prioritised law and order in the development of the country. A similar announcement was made in Parliament on 4 January 2000 (*GORTT* 2000a; 2000c). On 4 February the formal request was sent to the President for signing. Robinson refused to

sign the documents for more than three weeks, indicating that he was seeking legal advice "since issues of a constitutional nature" might have arisen. This caused further tension between himself and Panday. On 29 February Robinson signed the document, and the three-man Commission was launched on 17 April 2000, headed by Lord MacKay of Clashfern, former Lord Chancellor of the United Kingdom (*TG* 23 February 2000; 1 March 2000).

On 25 February 2000, Panday announced in the House of Representatives that, with the support of Manning, he had sent a letter on the previous day to the Commonwealth Secretariat at Marlborough House, requesting the presence of a Commonwealth Observer Group at the next general elections, in light of the unjustified claims by the opposition that the next elections would not be conducted fairly. Noting that this was the first time such observers were requested, Panday expressed the hope "that the Opposition ... [would] now desist from remarks which could impugn the integrity of our Electoral Processes" (*GORTT* 2000).

A local government by-election was called for Rio Claro North after the murdered body of its representative Hansraj Sumairsingh, chairman of the Rio Claro/Mayaro corporation, was found on 31 December 1999. His death was thought to be linked to his attempts to fight corruption in the URP, and Dhanraj Singh had been questioned by police on 7 January 2000 (*TE* 4 March 2000). On 17 February Panday gave an ultimatum to Singh to "remove the criminal element" from the URP or face dismissal (*TG* 19 February 2000). After being refused help from PNM Chairman Baboolal, fellow Cabinet Minister Joseph Theodore, and the local government corporations in what was widely considered an ill-defined task, on 1 March Singh handed in his report stating that he could not find criminal elements. On 4 March Singh answered to reporters that

he would not be contesting the next general elections, denying that he was asked to step down by Panday (*TE* 23 February 2000; 5 March 2000; *TG* 22-4 February 2000; 2 March 2000).

For the 3 April elections, Prime Minister Panday, Spiritual Baptist Archbishop Barbara Burke, former House Speaker Occah Seapaul, Works Minister Sadiq Baksh, Chaguanas Mayor Orlando Nagessar, and senior party officials of the UNC were present to support to their candidate, Hazarie Ramdeen, while Port of Spain Mayor John Rahael, Mayor Elvin Edwards of Arima, Senator Joan Yuille-Williams (deputy Leader of the PNM), and Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Chairman Jerry Narace encouraged people to cast their votes for the PNM candidate, Roger Bholai. The UNC won the election by 1,588 votes to 655¹⁰³ (*TE* 4-5 April 2000). The day after the Rio Claro North by-election, Panday enthusiastically declared, "Manning is going to lead the PNM into two political defeats this year, later this year. That will be the Tobago House of Assembly elections, you can bet on that, and after that Mr. Manning will lead the PNM into yet another defeat in the mother of all battles, the next general election. That is also a bankable promise" (*TE* 6 April 2000).¹⁰⁴

A SARA poll conducted from 23 March to 1 April confirmed Panday's optimism. While 43 percent of the sample indicated that the UNC should be given another term and 42 percent said it was time for a change, 43 per cent of the respondents indicated that they would vote for the UNC in Government while only 27 percent said they would vote for the PNM. The poll indicated that 81 percent of Indo-Trinidadians supported the

¹⁰³ In 1999, the UNC received 1,377 votes and the PNM 400. No other candidates contested the seat (GORTT [1999a]).

UNC and 5 percent supported the PNM, while 46 per cent of Africans supported the PNM and 14 per cent of Afro-Trinidadians supported the UNC. Also of significance, 79 percent of those polled expressed an intention to vote which, if followed through, would result in the highest turnout rate since 1961 (*TE* 9 April 2000).¹⁰⁵ Responding to the poll, Panday quipped, "Elections are won on election day between six o'clock in the morning and six o'clock in the evening. ... [Yesterday's poll] may not necessarily mean that they [voters] would feel that way tomorrow ... they may feel better" (*TE* 10 April 2000).

At a press conference on 18 April, former PNM activist (up to 1992) and executive at the National Petroleum Marketing Company, Rodney Charles, was announced as the UNC Public Relations Officer. Also, businessmen Jack Warner (vice-president of the Federation of International Football Associations) and Patrick Patel (an executive at Angostura), in addition to earlier supporters Ishwar Galbaransingh and Kama Maharaj, had been reported as funding the UNC campaign heavily (*TE* 18 April 2000; 23 April 2000). Also of significance, on 19 April Minister of Works Sadiq Baksh was reported to have resigned from cabinet to concentrate on full-time party work (*TE* 20 April 2000).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ According to the THA Act, however, unless the THA dissolves early, an election can only be called by the President between 9 February and 9 March 2001 (*TE* 8 April 2000).

¹⁰⁵ Even after the local government elections, a poll conducted by the Ansa-McAl Psychological Research Centre on 14-5 July 1999 found that 74 percent of the population rated Panday's performance as prime minister as "good" or "very good." Broken down into social groups, Panday received favourable assessments from 92 percent of Indo-Trinidadians, 62 percent of Afro-Trinidadians, and 54 percent of the mixed group; 81 percent of males and 69 percent of females; and over 75 percent in all education and income groups, except for those with only technical/vocational education for whom the ratio was 56 percent (*TG* 18 July 1999, 4).

¹⁰⁶ Baksh's replacement was said to be either Jearlean John, or TIDCO chairman and CL Financial executive Carlos John.

The PNM, meanwhile, were buoyed by the 1999 local government election results. As soon as the election results were announced, Manning summed up well the feeling later expressed by many, as he proclaimed with satisfaction, "There are some things that money just cannot buy." He then demanded that general elections be called immediately. The day after, Manning confidently stated, "You now understand all opposition talk – that the PNM cannot win under Manning – is just old talk." The PNM published a full page "Thank You" ad, and on 25-6 July organised a two-day, two-hundred-car, island-wide motorcade (*TE* 13-5 July 1999; *TG* 18 July 1999; 27 July 1999). The PNM's performance was seen by a number of persons as an African victory over Indian aggression. Selwyn Ryan described "high fives", hugs, kisses, and "body bumps," and declared that "Afro-Trinidadians have shown that they are not as gullible and venal as the UNC strategists ... [believed,] with all the money and project work used to bribe the electorate. From the talks I've had over the last 24 hours, it appears that Afro-Trinidadians are no longer as defensive or apologetic as they were before the election. ... They have gained the confidence in their capacity to resist the onslaught of the UNC" (*TE* 15 July 1999, 18). He later described the UNC's use of Africans in its advertising campaign as "obnoxious" (*TE* 18 July 1999, 11).¹⁰⁷

However, while the UNC were becoming enthused again, the PNM were upset with two departures. On 7 April 2000, three months after his father, Kamaluddin Mohammed, accepted the post of CARICOM Ambassador, Alimudeen Mohammed resigned as chairman of PNM Party Group 12, PRO of the San Juan/Barataria constituency, and member of the PNM General Council, because of his cousin, PNM Deputy Leader

¹⁰⁷ The "backfiring" of the advertising campaign seems to parallel the effect of the ONR general elections campaign of 1981 (Ryan 1989b, 282).

Senator Nafeesa Mohammed, who had been seeking nomination for the Barataria/San Juan constituency¹⁰⁸ (TE 11 April 2000). Also, a majority of nominations for candidates were still to be filled by 15 April 2000, although the PNM announced an Ash Wednesday (8 March) deadline (TE 15 April 2000). Meanwhile on 11 April 2000, Manning unreasonably declared that the government might use as an excuse the current nurses strike to call a state of emergency and postpone the general elections (TE 13 April 2000). Preparing for the coming elections, on 30 April a PNM Special Convention met to discuss its draft document entitled, "The Vision: Positioning Trinidad and Tobago for the Global Age 2000-2020" (TE 29 April 2000).

Adding a twist to the imminent elections, the Elections and Boundaries Commission announced that it would recommend in May 2000 the creation of an additional La Horquetta constituency, due to the disproportionate growth of potential voters in northern Trinidad (TE 16 April 2000).¹⁰⁹ Unusually, a boundary change did not occur in 1995, and more significantly, this addition would be the first since 1966 to alter the number of elected seats. The new constituency, between Tunapuna and Arima, would create thirty-five seats in Trinidad, virtually eliminating the possibility of deadlock, and modifying the role of the two Tobago seats.

The NAR, however, seemed to increasingly shut itself out of Trinidad politics. After Mohammed was formally elected as NAR Leader on 13 July 1997, he declared that the party would seek to re-establish itself as an independent entity (CI August 1997, 11; TG 28 December 1997). However, his stewardship was less than authoritative. Mohammed

¹⁰⁸ In 1995, the UNC received 7,611 votes and the PNM 6,666 in Barataria/San Juan.

¹⁰⁹ The Commission earlier reported that an additional 90,287 voters increased the total electorate to 928,028 (TE 20 March 2000).

claimed that he was not consulted about Job's appointment to the Cabinet in May 1997, and in May 1998 he refused to attend the elections to establish the NAR's Tobago Island Council out of the Tobago Steering Committee because he claimed that he was not properly informed (*CI* May 1997; June 1997; *TG* 28 December 1997; *TE* 15 August 1997; 14 May 1988). Basdeo Panday ridiculed Mohammed's May 1998 statement in Barbados that it was "time for a woman to be Prime Minister," wondering whether Mohammed disqualified himself or wanted to change his sex (Siewah and Arjoonsingh 1998, vol. 2, 320). Beginning on 17 June 1999, Mohammed held unsuccessful talks with Patrick Manning about forming a coalition for the coming local government elections. In the aftermath, Mohammed publicly declared that Manning had to be removed as leader of the PNM. Manning dismissed the NAR as a "two by four party," and NAR members including Robert Mayers and Lincoln Myers formed a party group distancing themselves from Mohammed, arguing that his actions and statements were never authorised by the NAR general council (*TE* 24-5 June 1999; *TG* 25 June 1999; 2 July 1999). On 24 October 1999 the NAR national council appointed as interim leader Anthony Smart (former Attorney General, 1989-1991), with Mohammed claiming that he was improperly dismissed. During the stand-off between the President and the Prime Minister, Smart claimed that the NAR was given the opportunity to resurrect itself (*CI* 5 November 1999, 3; *TG* 31 January 2000). On 30 April 2000 Smart was elected NAR leaders at its National and Special Conference (*TE* 1 May 2000).

In Tobago, the NAR's dominance was met by a new opposition force composed of the three independents in the THA, supported by Pamela Nicholson. By 1999 they had formed the People's Empowerment Party (PEP) and in February 2000 PEP leader

Moore-Miggins displaced the lone PNM member, William McKenzie, as the minority leader in the THA (*TE* 8 February 2000).¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, tensions between the Tobago NAR and the UNC seemed to be greatly reduced as Charles expressed his cautious satisfaction with the THA Commission announced by the Panday (*TE* 28 April 2000).

Another notable political development had come when former PNM Deputy Leader, Wendell Mottley,¹¹¹ held on 1 May the first public meeting of the All-Inclusive Movement (AIM), with a small crowd of about one hundred in St. Augustine (*TG* 4 May 2000). Mottley claimed that the organisation was "not a political party, nor ... [was] it affiliated to any political party," but that it was "an organisation of concerned citizens." The launch followed a campaign in which 200,000 flyers were posted to homes all over Trinidad and Tobago and full-page press advertisements were purchased in the press (*TE* 6 April 2000).¹¹²

Up to May 2000, even without the benefit of knowing the results of the coming general elections, it is safe to say that the Panday administration is one of the most important in Trinidad and Tobago's history. A strong economy coinciding with leadership by an outspoken, aggressive Prime Minister willing to confront political and social challengers has imparted a character to political life resembling politics in the Williams

¹¹⁰ In January 1999 President Robinson refused Moore-Miggins's November 1998 request to be declared minority leader, despite receiving the backing of Ramsey-Moore and Alfred, on the grounds that Moore-Miggins could not "command" their support. PNM minority leader, William McKenzie, was supported by Hochoy Charles (*CI* February 1999, 7; *TE* 16 December 1998). Ironically, in 1978, because President Clarke did not consider that Shah could command the support of Robinson, Shah was refused leadership of the opposition (Ryan 1989a, 164).

¹¹¹ Since leaving the PNM in January 1996, Mottley became a consultant with the US bank Credit Suisse First Boston, which was involved in the 1995 privatisation of BWIA and the 1998 InnCogen agreement, among others (*CI* June 1996, 11; *TE* 3 November 1998).

¹¹² On 27 November 1998 Mottley had addressed the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasting Association at the Hilton Hotel declaring that "the pressure for change must come from outside the party system" (*TE* 29 November 1998).

era. If the April 2000 SARA poll's prediction of a 79 percent voter turnout rate is correct, then it can be argued that the UNC government has revived political interest in the country not seen since 1961. The comparison with 1961 might be seen in another way, as well, with the predominance of race feeling. However, the marginal seats of Barataria/San Juan, Tunapuna, St. Joseph, San Fernando West, and Ortoire/Mayaro, the possibility of the new constituency in the East-West Corridor, and the importance of the Tobago seats (and the potential split NAR votes with the emergence of the PEP) allow ample opportunities for other types of alliances to be made cutting across racial groups, as with the UNC-NAR alliance in 1995.

The UNC's enthusiastic momentum – growing steadily from 1995 when it had to secure leadership of government in coalition with the NAR, to 1996 with its strong showing at the local government election, to 1997 when Lasse and Griffith crossed over and secured a majority for the party independent of the NAR – was halted somewhat by the 1999 local government elections. Despite the expectations of some commentators, the government did not split as it did in 1988 and has lasted for five years. It is also worthwhile to recognise the relative stability of the political landscape, and the resulting limitation on political alternatives, as opposed to the 1971-91 period. In addition, Panday has undoubtedly been the most colourful – and passion-arousing – prime minister since Eric Williams. It will be interesting to see whether his will be the first administration since Williams's to secure a second term in office. At that point Trinidad and Tobago might enter a new stage in its history of development, if the UNC are able to maintain and further develop a continuity of purpose and direction in the life of the country. If the UNC fail to capture a second term, however, the phase of weak political leadership will persist and Trinidad and Tobago's "half-madness" may well continue to triumph.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

A Summary of Findings as Related to Main and Subsidiary Research Questions

This thesis has sought to identify the main political challenges faced by the various governments of Trinidad and Tobago between 1956 and 2000. In Chapter Two, which covered the 1925-53 period of gradually increasing political responsibility, it was argued that the most notable aspect of political organisation was the absence of national parties. Instead there existed a diversity of interests and groups – regionally, ethnically, and labour based – while political aspirants contested seats as independents or as members of loosely-organised and short-lived parties. Up to 1955, there was no national organisation comparable to those which existed in Barbados and Jamaica that was ready to lead the country to self-government and independence. In Chapter Three we saw how Williams and the PNM – out of a combination of political shrewdness, determination, toughness, aggression, luck, and circumstance – had prevailed over the independent political tradition with their brand of party politics; vanquished the old politicians who had re-formed into the DLP; negotiated an agreement with the Americans on Chaguaramas; reached a settlement on Independence with the British

Government and with the parliamentary opposition; and secured an unprecedented two-thirds majority in parliament. Chapter Four described how the PNM maintained its two-thirds majority right up to Williams's death in 1981, despite the continuous extra-parliamentary radical trade union and black power opposition, the new generation of opposition parties that emerged in 1976, and the challenge posed in 1980-1 by the ONR.

Chapter Five described how the Chambers administration could not sustain either the political or economic gains made during the Williams years. Despite the rhetoric about prudence and restraint, the Chambers administration did not act decisively enough to counter the recession. Chambers was seen as an intellectual failure as well, with the many jokes made about his witlessness on the one hand, and the NAR's spectacular seizing of the political vanguard position on the other. Chapter Six examined how the NAR, which had been popularly mandated with such enthusiasm in 1986, was a political failure. It could control neither its members nor the country, losing almost every significant battle it faced after the September 1987 local government elections, whether party indiscipline or social protest. The challenges of the period were exceptionally difficult – including economic downturn and being the first non-PNM government in office in thirty years – and the party was not up to the task, overestimating the commitment of its early supporters.

In Chapter Seven we saw how the PNM suffered its second loss in ten years, despite the general goodwill shown to the Manning administration at the beginning of its term in 1991. A combination of the UNC's and Panday's political skill, Manning's political blunders, a rise in Indian consciousness sparked by the 150th anniversary of Indian arrival, and perhaps a vague dissatisfaction with the economic and social situation

(despite the objective improvements) served to dislodge the PNM. Chapter Eight detailed the distinctive major themes running through Panday administration's term of office – the emphasis on law and order, national unity through the affirmation of cultural pluralism, and a results-oriented approach to social and economic development – and noted the adversarial position it has had with the media, the political parties, the THA, the trade unions, persons claiming to speak for Afro-Trinidadian welfare, and other more diffuse groups and interests.

The first subsidiary question of the thesis asked whether there were distinctive problems, programmes, goals, methods, and/or themes transcending particular governments and/or opposition. In the Trinidad and Tobago environment, political emergence and survival has been a significant task in itself, and seems to be a constant challenge. The initial establishment of the PNM and UNC governments with a plurality of votes, against the expectations of the political observers; and the political demise of the seriously-formed PDP, DLP, WFP, the Liberal Party, NJAC, DAC, Tapia, ONR, and NAR parties¹ testifies to this historical fact.

While the challenges that each government faced were specific, one notes the constancy of intense, yet diffuse and incoherent, disputation in Trinidad and Tobago's politics, regardless of the economic strategy (broad five-year plans, state-led heavy industrialisation, private-sector led outward-orientation) or racial background (African-dominated, multi-racial coalition, Indian-dominated) of the various administrations.

¹ Despite the poor electoral performance of the Liberals, WFP, Tapia, and NJAC, the author sets them apart from such short-lived parties as the ANC, PPM, WINP, MOTION, and others.

The political problem identified by Eric Williams in his “Case for Party Politics in Trinidad and Tobago” (1955a) remains to be solved in contemporary Trinidad and Tobago: that is, the creation of a system of disciplined, organised, durable, principled, national political parties. If the political configuration of the 1990s continues into the first decades of the twenty-first century, then the first task in the creation of a party system might said to have been achieved: that is, the existence of durable national political parties.² A considerable amount of political dissent in Trinidad and Tobago, however, remains incoherent and undisciplined, seemingly averse to sustained organisation and/or expression through the existing formal institutions. This can be seen in the frequency of demonstrations and protestations against the government while there exists a comparatively high abstention rate in elections³ and other public exercises. Whether this can be remedied by constitutional re-organisation, or whether the problems are more deep-seated in culture, habit, history, or social structure cannot be determined here. This may be an area in which further inquiry can be undertaken.

Another subsidiary question was, how far have racial and ethnic concerns dominated politics in Trinidad and Tobago? Certainly racial and ethnic concerns have been important in politics since 1956, as is evidenced by the persistence of a core of PNM and PDP, DLP, and UNC seats in areas of high African and Indian concentrations respectively (except in 1971 and 1986). However, some important aspects of politics in Trinidad and Tobago should make one cautious about over-interpreting the role of ethnic competition.

² It is of interest to note that the PNM remain the only party to have contested every seat in every general and local election. Technically, then, it is the only fully nationally organised party. The UNC have never contested Tobago West in general elections, and only in 1999 did it contest every seat in local government elections.

For instance the argument that “communalism” was dominant in Trinidad and Tobago’s politics even before 1956⁴ should be tempered by the fact that only the PDP in 1956 (who won five seats) could be reasonably counted as a communal organisation that successfully presented itself for political office. It should be noted that an explicitly “racial” party like the African National Congress in 1961 and 1971, the implicit “Africanness” of the Butler Party from 1946-66,⁵ and the DLP’s fairly open racial appeals to Indians in 1976 were electorally unsuccessful. In the 1956 elections, it should be remembered that the PNM polled a greater share of votes in the Indian-majority Caroni seats than it did in the Eastern Counties and in St. Patrick where Afro-Creoles were the majority. A straightforward racial argument is also contradicted by the fact that as the number and national proportion of Indians steadily grew in Trinidad and Tobago – from 195,747 (35.1 percent) in 1946 to 429,187 (40.7 percent) in 1980 – the Indian-led parties fared worse, with the DLP capturing 41.7 percent of the vote and two-thirds of parliament in 1961, and the ULF capturing 15.1 percent of the vote and less than one-quarter of the parliamentary seats in 1981.⁶

Outside of elections, too, interpretations of politics in the post-Independence era as primarily driven by African-Indian competition would not account for the anti-Williams Black Power movement that called for Africans and Indians to unite; NUFF’s violent campaign against the Afro-Creole establishment; the loyalty displayed to ANR Robinson’s Prime Ministership by Indian Cabinet Ministers Winston Dookeran, Bho-

³ The *Human Development Report* (UNDP 2000) lists voter turnout rates in the last elections held in all the various democracies of the world for which there are records.

⁴ Most forcefully stated by LaGuerre (1982), but also stated in passing, or implied, as a “given” in Premdas (1999), Bahadoorsingh (1968), Malik (1971), and Ryan (1972).

⁵ However, the Butler Party effectively collapsed after its Indian members left in 1953 to join the PDP.

Tewarie, Brinsley Samaroo and Sahadeo Basdeo; the opposition to him expressed by MPs Jensen Fox, Eden Shand, Arthur Sanderson, Ken Butcher, and Theodore Guerra; and the Muslimeen's demand in 1990 that Winston Dookeran replace ANR Robinson as Prime Minister.

It should be noted that the danger in Trinidad and Tobago has never really been systematic, organised ethnic violence as much as malaise, dysfunction, apathy, and anomie. Changes of government have occurred in 1956, 1986, 1991, and 1995 with no threat of violence. On the other hand, serious crime, suicide, migration, and divorce did rise significantly in the 1980s.

The last subsidiary questions asked were, how did Prime Minister Eric Williams survive in office for five terms? And how did subsequent Prime Ministers fail to win a second term? While others have argued that Williams was able to survive in office on the basis of racial appeals to Africans, the evidence presented in the thesis suggests that the answer to this question is more complex.

Williams's capture of power in 1956 was precarious, and against the expectations of contemporary political observers who expected a coalition government. His establishment of a two-thirds majority in 1961 was the result of a tactical mix of aggressive confrontation, compromise, and a shrewd exploitation of luck and opportunity, while presenting to the electorate the best organised political party ever to have existed in the country. His achievement over his twenty-five year career as Prime Minister seemed to result from his undoubted political mastery of the Trinidad and

⁶ The combined NATT (ULF, DAC, and Tapia) vote only amounted to 20.8 percent (GORTT 1982b, 202-3).

Tobago psyche, his determination and ability to face down his opposition, the consistency of his vision for the development of Trinidad and Tobago, the luck of the inflation of oil prices, and the disorganisation and weakness of the opposition.

Chambers, Robinson, and Manning, although burdened with severe economic challenges, were arguably political failures above all else. After Williams's death in 1981, the PNM lost its aggressive and forward-looking character, and no subsequent government had the political ability to secure a second term in office. The PNM under Chambers did not institute the inevitably unpopular measures advocated by the Demas Report, and instead increased expenditure to their highest ever levels. In addition, in the absence of Williams the opposition forces were able to band together, put the PNM on the defensive, and appear as the forward-looking element, espousing efficient and honest economic management and new level of multi-racialism. The victory of the NAR was overwhelming, but despite the enthusiastic and unprecedented level of support, the NAR administration could not implement its programme as it could not hold up against the hostilities from without and within. Robinson failed to hold his party and the government together, and the attempted coup epitomised the level of political disorder and ineffectiveness. The 1991-5 Manning administration had fulfilled the structural adjustment begun in the 1980s and placed the country on a sustained path of economic growth in a liberalised environment. Manning's political blunders, the rising Indian consciousness stimulated by the 150th anniversary of Indian arrival, and the UNC's ability to capitalise on both were decisive in the PNM's defeat.

One can only speculate, but it would be hard to imagine Eric Williams acting as weakly, indecisively, or inappropriately if he found himself in similar positions to those

of Chambers, Robinson, and Manning. Panday's success is yet to be determined, but it can be seen that he possesses a political style similar to Williams's.

Impact, Implications, and Recommendations

The prime focus of the study has been its attention to detail, the emphasis on primary material, and the attempt to link the empirical material into a coherent whole, covering Trinidad and Tobago's politics in the twentieth century. The impact of this study in terms of what was learned is that the continuously evolving nature of Trinidad and Tobago politics and society is perhaps the most important factor to consider in future research. Attempts at detailed theory-building in such a context should accordingly remain modest, at a "pre-theoretical" level perhaps, until a more stable situation develops.

It is recommended that further research be conducted in the context of the findings presented above. Emerging from this study is a picture of Trinidad and Tobago that is fundamentally anarchic. This anarchy, perhaps, not only derives from its historical newness and heterogeneous antecedents, but also perhaps by its relatively insignificant position – economic, military, intellectual, and cultural – in the wider world, and its related "purposelessness." This bundle of attributes may be specific to Trinidad and Tobago, or it may be found in other countries. The "half-made society" referred to by V.S. Naipaul might be a category of society which could be elaborated by comparative study. Perhaps study of other new, evolving societies such as those in Mauritius, Singapore, and Canada may temper, modify, or strengthen such understanding.

More specifically to research on Trinidad and Tobago, it should be recognised from the material presented in the thesis that formulaic understandings of race and ethnicity in the country's politics are insufficient. Subtler and empirically accurate analyses are needed to discern and evaluate the objective impact of ethnicity in politics.

Another area in which further inquiry may prove to be valuable is the study of political leadership. Perhaps a few more examples of leadership in different contexts may be needed to make such a study useful, however. These examples can be drawn from other societies (e.g. Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam and his successors Aneerood Jugnauth and Navin Ramgoolam in Mauritius, or Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Tok Chong in Singapore), or from Trinidad and Tobago itself after a few more persons have passed through the position of Prime Minister.

Other questions for further research that may follow from this thesis are: is there a pattern to political consolidation (1961-71, 1991-2000) and disorganisation (1925-61, 1971-91) in Trinidad and Tobago? Can generalisations be made about one-party dominance – such as that by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional in Mexico (1929-2000), the Indian National Congress (1947-1977), and the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan (1955-1993) – and the period following removal from office? Or in a wider context, are there important generalisable differences in the fundamental problems of politics between old societies (Iraq, India, Iran, Great Britain, [and in a Caribbean context] Jamaica, Barbados) and new societies (Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, Mauritius, Singapore)? These questions seem well worth consideration.

This thesis has sought to provide a solid contribution to scholarship by providing new, useful, detailed information on the politics of Trinidad and Tobago, arranged in a

coherent whole. In the process, it is hoped that a broad and sturdy base has been provided upon which future researchers can build and extend their own work – empirical, comparative, and theoretical.

APPENDIX A.

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Lloyd Best, Leader of Tapia House Group, 1968-present; founder member of New World Group 1962-8. Series of interviews from June-September 1999.

Sheldon Daniel, Research Analyst, Government Affairs, BP Amoco, 1998-present; *Economist Intelligence Unit*, 1997-present. Series of interviews in June 1999.

Winston Dookeran, Governor, Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997-present; Deputy Prime Minister 1988-91, Minister of Planning and Reconstruction, 1986-91. Interviewed on 17 June 1999.

Ken Gordon, Minister of Industry, Enterprise, and Tourism, NAR Government, 1986-1990; Managing Director, Trinidad Express Newspapers, Ltd. 1968-86; Executive Chairman, Caribbean Communications Network, 1991-present; Chairman Neal and Massey 1997-present. Interviewed on 25 June 1999.

Hansley Hanoomansingh, DLP Member of Parliament for Caroni East, 1966-71; National Council for Indian Culture Executive. Interviewed on 27 June 1999.

The Honourable John Humphrey, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Settlements, 1995-1999; Minister of Works and Transport, 1986-88. Interviewed on 23 July 1999.

Khafra Kambon, NJAC Executive, 1968-81; Chairman, Emancipation Support Committee 1993-present. Interviewed on 18 August 1999.

Dr. J. O'Neil Lewis, CMT, Ambassador to the United States, 1981-7; Ambassador to the EC, 1973-81; Acting Economic Advisor to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 1950-3; Public Service, 1958-65; Industrial Court, 1965-73; Deputy Chairman of the Integrity Commission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 1987-present. Interviewed on 12 July 1999.

Alloy Lequay, DLP Executive, 1960-76; NATT Executive; NAR Party Chairman. Interviewed on 13 July 1999.

Satnarine Maharaj, Secretary General, Sanathan Dharma Maha Sabha of Trinidad and Tobago, 1977-present. Interviewed on 2 July 1999.

The Honourable Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 1991-5; Leader of Opposition, 1995-present, 1987-91; Political Leader of the PNM, 1987- present. Interviewed on 23, 27 July, 3 August 1999.

- Kamaluddin Mohammed, Deputy Prime Minister, 1981-86; Minister of Government, 1956-86; Member of Parliament for Barataria, 1956-86. Interviewed on 17 July 1999.
- Robin Moonan, Deputy Mayor of San Fernando, 1992-6; UNC candidate for Cocoyea/Tarouba, 1999 Local Government Elections. Interviewed on 24 July 1999.
- Dr. Roodal Moonilal, Director, Policy Monitoring Unit, Office of the Prime Minister, 1998-present. Series of interviews from July-August 1999.
- The Honourable Basdeo Panday, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 1995-present; Deputy Prime Minister 1986-88; Leader of Opposition 1976-86, 1991-5; President General of ATS&GWTU 1974-98; founder member of WFP, ULF, NAR, UNC, NATUC. Interviewed on 27 July 1999.
- His Grace The Archbishop Anthony Pantin, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Port of Spain, 1968-2000. Interviewed on 17 June 1999.
- His Excellency Arthur NR Robinson, President of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997-present; Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 1986-1991. Founding member of the PNM, DAC, NAR. Chief Secretary of the THA, 1980-6. Interviewed on 16 August 1999.
- Dr. Brinsley Samaroo, Minister of Decentralisation, 1988-91; Member of Parliament for Nariva, 1986-91; Leader of Opposition in the Senate, 1983-6. Series of interviews from July-September 1999.
- Nicholas Simonette, PNM General Secretary, 1956-76; ONR Executive member. Interviewed on 6 July 1999.

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